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Life Eight tech picks for CNY D2&3



Cyber tips for Year of the Pig D6

Home Certis Cisco's new staff BI



Home Ex-gangster now a youth mentor B7

World Australia sizzles A14&15



Opinion Brexit: The illusion of Singapore on the Thames A17 • Business High-end car sales soar C1

US charges against Huawei, Meng cast pall on trade talks

China accuses US of political manipulation, but both downplay any impact on meeting

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China Bureau Chief
In Beijing
and **Charissa Yong**
US Correspondent
In Washington

China has accused the United States of “political manipulation” after prosecutors on Monday brought criminal charges against Huawei and its chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou for allegedly conspiring to violate US sanctions on Iran.

The lawsuit will cast a pall over a second round of trade talks starting today in Washington. The US aims to pin China down on forced technology transfer and intellectual property theft, among other things, during the two-day meeting.

In a strongly worded statement – released hours after the US Justice Department charged the Chinese technology giant and Meng with defrauding banks to evade sanctions on Iran and stealing trade secrets from an American competitor – Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang urged the US to “stop unreasonable suppression of Chinese companies”, saying China will resolutely defend the legitimate rights and interests of its enterprises.

“For some time, the US has used state power to discredit and crack down on specific Chinese companies in an attempt to stifle the legitimate operations of enterprises. There are strong political attitudes and political manipulation behind

them,” Mr Geng said yesterday. He also urged the US to revoke Meng’s arrest warrant and Canada to release her immediately. Meng is out on bail in Vancouver pending a court hearing next week.

The charges are part of a broader crackdown on Huawei over fears that its technology is being used to spy on the US and others, and over larger unhappiness that China is competing unfairly in the global economy by stealing trade secrets from Western companies.

But in China, the charges are viewed and painted as US attempts to suppress its technological rise.

US officials stressed that the charges against Huawei and Meng are separate from the high-stakes talks with China.

“They are a totally separate process. The negotiations on the trade front will continue to be ongoing,” White House press secretary Sarah Sanders said at a briefing.

China also downplayed the impact the legal wranglings might have on the talks, saying both sides should work together to bring to fruition the consensus reached between US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping last month.

But analysts believe otherwise.

“The trade talks are not just about trade, investments, goods and services or market access. More importantly, they are also about US-China competition over technology. This issue is part and parcel of that tech war between the two countries,” said Associate Professor Li Ming-



Chinese technology giant Huawei says it “is not aware of any wrongdoing” by its chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou.

jiang, coordinator of the China programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.

“No matter what the Americans say, the Chinese will link the issue with their tech rivalry and believe the US government and legal institutions are doing all this simply for the purpose of curbing China’s tech advancement.”

Meng’s arrest in Vancouver on Dec 1 last year, at the request of the US, sparked a diplomatic row. The US authorities, who have filed a formal extradition request, stressed that the charges were allegations, and that the defendants were presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

Huawei rejected the accusations, saying it was disappointed to learn of the charges brought against it.

“The company denies that it or its subsidiary or affiliate has committed any of the asserted violations of US law set forth in each of the indictments,” a Huawei spokesman told The Straits Times in a statement, adding that Huawei “is not aware of any wrongdoing by Ms Meng, and believes the US courts will ultimately reach the same conclusion”.

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SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A6&7

Unusual ‘ssssshopper’ at Orchard



A python that found its way to Orchard Road stunned passers-by as it struggled to free itself from capture yesterday morning. About 3m long, the snake was spotted outside Tang Plaza. The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority said the snake was removed and handed over to Wildlife Reserves Singapore. Videos of the incident posted online have since gone viral. In some clips, the snake appears to attack one of the men trying to subdue it. PHOTO: RABBIKHAN KHAN/FACEBOOK SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A8

Postman arrested over alleged dumping of mail in bin

Ng Huiwen

A postman serving 17 Housing Board blocks in Ang Mo Kio was arrested yesterday following SingPost’s investigations into a case of unopened letters and packages allegedly tossed into a rubbish bin.

The postal service provider’s actions follow a Facebook post by user Alyce Kathlyn on Monday night, which shared eight images of the discarded letters in the bin.

The images showed letters from the Land Transport Authority, the National University of Singapore and for the Community Health Assist Scheme, among others.

Ms Kathlyn salvaged the mail and placed it by a nearby letterbox.

In its statement yesterday, SingPost said that it has referred the case to the police following findings from internal investigations.



Letters and packages discarded in a rubbish bin, as seen in a photo posted by Facebook user Alyce Kathlyn on Monday. PHOTO: ALYCE KATHLYN/ FACEBOOK

The police confirmed that a report has been lodged and a 29-year-old man was arrested.

Yesterday, SingPost apologised to residents of Blocks 175 to 178 and Blocks 612 to 619 in Ang Mo Kio Avenue 4, and Blocks 179 to 182 and Block 611 in Ang Mo Kio Avenue 5.

It declined further comment, saying the police are investigating.

In response to queries, the Infocomm Media Development Authority said it took a serious view of any incident that impacted the reliability, integrity and security of Singapore’s public postal services, and it would take appropriate action against anyone found guilty of contravening the Postal Services Act.

It also expressed concerns over the spate of recent service lapses by SingPost.

Earlier this month, the postal service provider drew ire from customers for its reportedly poor

delivery service during the year-end peak season.

Complaints were made on social media about letters and packages that were not delivered or delayed.

SingPost apologised for its “service failures”, and said that it would review and improve operational procedures.

About the latest incident, the postal service provider said on its Facebook page that a team had been dispatched to comb the area overnight, searching bins and mailboxes.

“Our main priority currently is to locate the letters and have them delivered to intended recipients,” it said.

SingPost said residents of the affected blocks may call its hotline on 6845-6222 between 9am and 9pm on weekdays for assistance.

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KL aims high in anti-graft fight

The Malaysian government yesterday launched an ambitious plan to eliminate corruption in five years.

Launching the National Anti-Corruption Plan, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said the country needs to move away from being

called a kleptocracy, “a very shameful label” due to recent huge financial scandals such as 1MDB.

Some of the leaders in Tun Dr Mahathir’s Pakatan Harapan alliance have strong reformist and anti-corruption credentials. Measures being

planned include reviewing how key appointments are made, formulating laws on political funding, and asking politicians and high-ranking civil servants to declare their assets.

SEE WORLD A10

A tangled love affair which hit many lives

Months after he came to Singapore to live with a local doctor he had met online and fallen in love with, Mikhy Farrera Brochez used a fake Bahamian passport to get himself tested for HIV. He tested positive and knew that he would not be allowed to get an employment pass to work in Singapore.

That kick-started a series of lies which were eventually uncovered and resulted in Brochez getting deported from Singapore – after he had managed to deceive the authorities for years with the help of his partner, Ler Teck Siang.

The most shocking twist to this story came last week when Brochez, who is no longer in Singapore, revealed the identities and details of 14,200 people with HIV.

This confidential information had allegedly been downloaded by Ler, who has been charged under the Official Secrets Act.

The Straits Times has pieced together, from court documents and other sources, the story of these two men, their tangled love affair and how it has dragged thousands of HIV-positive people into its fold.



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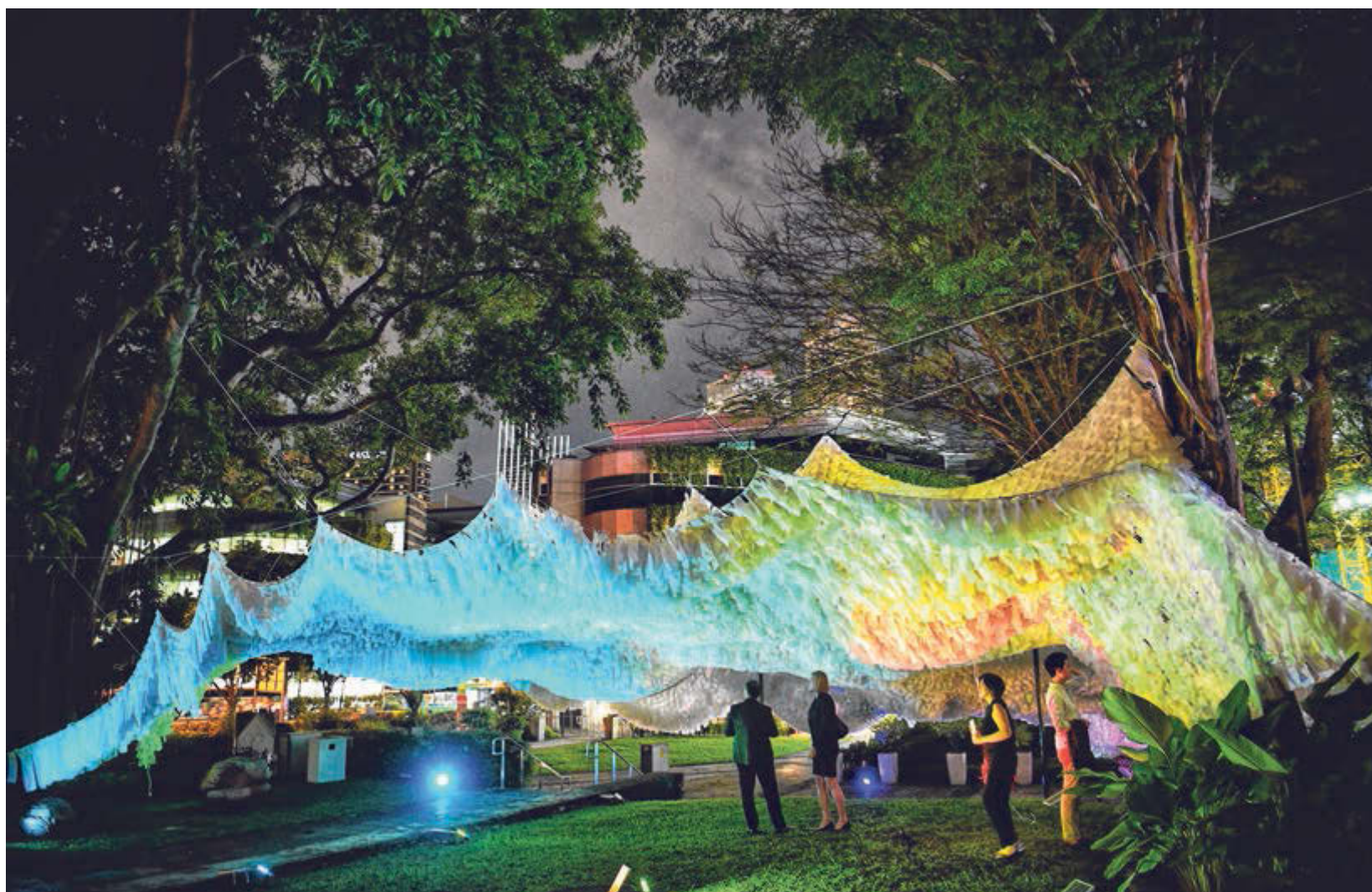


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SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A4&5

10 must-reads for today

1 Immersive digital art
Seven projects by local and international designers are on display at DigiMuse Presents, an exhibition at the National Museum of Singapore, which is on until Feb 17.
The exhibition uses technology, art and sound to create immersive experiences for museum-goers. **LIFE D8**



Pulse by Galina Mihaleva, Hedren Sum, Pat Pataranutoporn, Kathrin Albers and Audrey Ng is on display at DigiMuse Presents. ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR

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VIDEO

Singapore's history comes alive

Get up close with Sir Stamford Raffles and Major William Farquhar. Try out the National Heritage Board's new augmented reality trail designed to bring Singapore's history to life. <http://str.sg/balikapp>



VIDEO

Voice of Jakarta's MRT

The voice of Jakarta's long-awaited MRT network, slated to open in March, belongs to Singapore permanent resident Devianti Faridz. She was inspired by radio veteran Juanita Melson, the woman behind the original announcements for Singapore's own rail system. <http://str.sg/oLXJ>

2 Charges cast pall over talks

China has accused the United States of "political manipulation" after prosecutors brought criminal charges against Chinese telecom giant Huawei and its chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou for allegedly stealing trade secrets and conspiring to violate US sanctions on Iran. The lawsuit is likely to complicate this week's bilateral trade talks in Washington. **TOP OF THE NEWS A1**

3 Jail for ex-CHC leader

Chew Eng Han, the former City Harvest Church leader who tried to leave Singapore illegally, was sentenced to 13 months in jail. He will serve this after completing his earlier jail sentence of three years and four months for his role in the misuse of church funds. **TOP OF THE NEWS A8**

4 No ECRL decision: Mahathir

The Malaysian government has not made any decision regarding the East Coast Rail Link project, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday night, in an apparent flip-flop days after other senior officials indicated that the multibillion-dollar project had been scrapped. **WORLD A10**

5 Thai ministers step down

Four Thai ministers running in the country's March 24 election have resigned following criticism that they were using their posts to favour their newly formed party. Their Palang Pracharath Party is expected to push for Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha to continue in his role after the polls. **WORLD A11**

6 Brexiters' S'pore illusion

Brexiters cannot cherry-pick from the Singapore model to keep the British economy thriving after the country exits the European Union. Too many differences stand in the way, says associate editor Vikram Khanna (below). **OPINION A17**



Thai Industry Minister Uttama Savanayana, leader of the Palang Pracharath Party, resigned yesterday.
PHOTO: EPA-EFE

7 From waste to energy

Singapore's national water agency PUB and the National Environment Agency have found a way to turn what you flush down your toilet into a source of energy. Used water sludge from toilets and food waste are combined and then put through a biological process to produce biogas, a natural fuel. **HOME B1**

8 Social service help via video

A video-conferencing service is now available at two social service offices to connect clients with the agencies they need to reach, saving them the trouble of having to travel between different agencies. The Ministry of Social and Family Development plans to extend the service to more offices. **HOME B2**

9 Mortgage demand flags

Mortgage demand is flagging as private home buyers turned cautious in the wake of the July 6 cooling measures, tighter financing requirements and higher financing costs in a rising interest rate environment, according to a study by the Credit Bureau Singapore. **BUSINESS C1**

10 Local coaches to the fore

Singapore Athletics has named 10 local coaches to train the senior and age-group relay teams under a new system to identify the best athletes. Top local male sprinter Timothee Yap gives it the thumbs up, saying: "The biggest benefit is youth development." **SPORT C10**



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Tangled web of love and lies led to data leak affecting many

Two men who met online and fell in love end up stripping thousands of their right to privacy

Salma Khalik
Senior Health Correspondent

It was a love story that progressed through a series of lies to the authorities.

When the lies were uncovered, and they were separated, one of them decided to make others pay for it – by revealing online the identities and details of 14,200 people who had HIV, like him.

It was confidential data from the Ministry of Health (MOH), which had allegedly been downloaded by his partner who worked there.

Ironically, when he was in court accused of cheating and drug-related offences, Mikhy Farrera Brochez referred to a data leak at the MOH.

“He went into a tirade about being a victim of blackmail and an alleged data leak at MOH,” Judge Jasvender Kaur noted while sentencing him in 2017. “He even alleged that the prosecution was politically motivated. It was clear that the accused was unremorseful.”

Brochez, 33, had referred to the data leak on his own, even though his own case then had nothing to do with it.

It is only now, months after he was deported from Singapore and separated from his partner Ler Teck Siang, 36, a doctor, that he has unleashed the data that Ler is accused of mishandling under the Official Secrets Act.

Their love story had taken strange twists. Both were in their early 20s when they fell in love after meeting online in 2007.

Brochez, who was around 21 then, had no family ties in the United States other than a grandfather who was in his late 70s.

He decided to uproot from his home country and join Ler, then about 24 and practising as a doctor in Singapore.

Brochez, who is of Jewish-Spanish descent, arrived in January 2008 and moved into Ler's private apartment at 20 Craig Road.

In March, using a fake Bahamian passport with the name Malatesta da Farrera-Brochez, the American

took an HIV test at a Singapore Anti-Tuberculosis Association (Sata) clinic. He tested positive.

The couple knew that Singapore would not grant him an employment pass if that surfaced.

So, when Brochez needed a clean blood test to get an employment pass, it started a chain of deception which was to drag both men through court and see the personal details of thousands with HIV splashed online.

At that time, Ler was working as a locum at My Family Clinic in Commonwealth Drive. On the morning of March 13, 2008, before leaving for work, he drew blood from his left arm and stored it in a test tube, which he took to the clinic.

Brochez went to the clinic the same evening for a blood test required by the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) for his application to work here. There, Ler took the tube of his own blood and labelled it with Brochez's details.

The blood test came up clean and Brochez received his employment pass later that month.

Using faked certificates, he landed a job at Temasek Polytechnic, teaching students early childhood studies and psychology.

Meanwhile, Ler joined the MOH

and was head of its National Public Health Unit (NPHU) from March 2012 until May 2013.

That gave him access to the details of all 14,200 people who had tested positive here for the human immunodeficiency virus since 1985 – up to January 2013 in the case of locals, and up to December 2011 in the case of foreigners.

Using his position as head of the unit which gave him full access, Ler downloaded the confidential information onto a thumb drive. Somehow, it ended up in Brochez's hands.

Ironically, at one point when they had relationship problems, Brochez even complained to MOH that Ler was taking screenshots of the HIV Registry. An investigation was launched and Ler was transferred to the TB control unit.

Meanwhile, on Oct 3, 2013, hav-

ing confirmed that the HIV-positive test done at a Sata clinic in March 2008 belonged to Brochez, MOH informed MOM that the American had faked his blood test.

A few days later, MOM confronted Brochez with this allegation. He denied the charge and offered to “prove” that he was innocent.

The whole rigmarole of faking the blood test was repeated in November when the American went to Twin City Medical Centre at Great World City, where Ler was working as a locum. Again, it was Ler's blood that was tested. Again the test came out clean.

Meanwhile, suspicion had been aroused and a police report was lodged against Brochez on Dec 11, 2013, for cheating on the second blood test.

The following month, in January

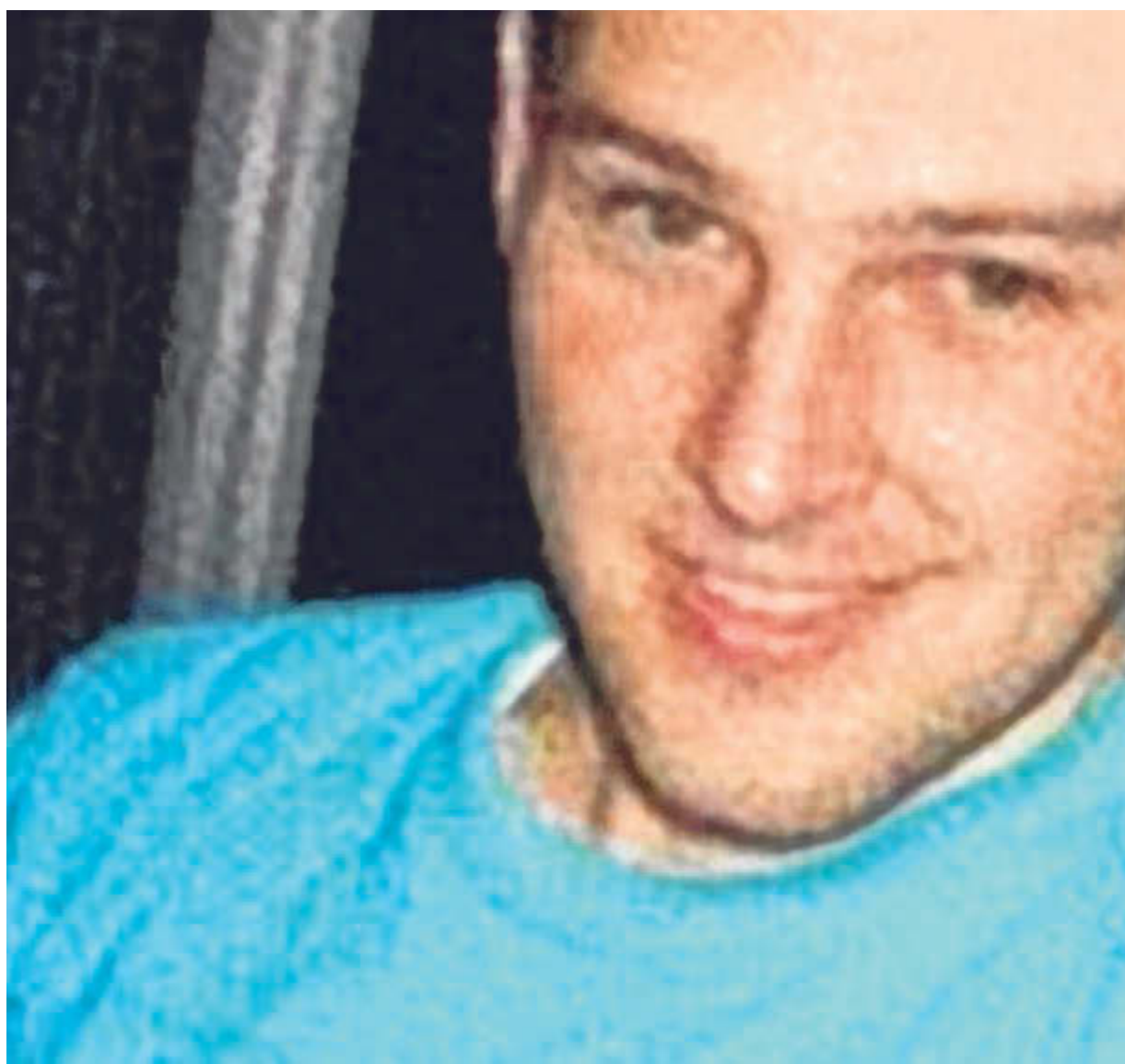
2014, Ler resigned from his position at the MOH, though it is not known why.

Shortly after this, the two men went to the United States, where they got married in New York City on April 24, 2014. Then they returned to Singapore and in May that year, Brochez lied to a police inspector that it was his own blood that had been tested.

Two years later, another tip-off exposed his web of lies. In May 2016, the MOH was told that Brochez possessed confidential information that had come from the HIV Registry. It lodged a police report.

On May 24, 2016, both men were arrested as their old lies about the faked blood tests came back to

JAIL TIME continued on A5



Ler Teck Siang (left) and Mikhy Farrera Brochez got married in New York City on April 24, 2014. They then returned to Singapore and in May that year, Brochez lied to a police inspector that it was his own blood that had been tested.

Spread of stolen data can be curbed by following digital trail: Experts

Hariz Baharudin

Very little can be done to retrieve the stolen data on the 14,200 people with HIV if it has been leaked on the Internet because of how easily files are shared online, said experts. But monitoring data online and following its trail can curb its spread and the damage it does, they added.

The confidential information included names, contact details and medical information, the Ministry of Health (MOH) said on Monday.

MOH said an American, Mikhy Farrera Brochez, who has been convicted of a number of crimes in Singapore, caused the leak after obtaining the information from his partner Ler Teck Siang, a Singaporean doctor who, as head of MOH's National Public Health Unit, had access to the HIV Registry.

After information is publicly shared on the Internet, Web users from all over the world can access it and make copies.

Experts told The Straits Times that this means a piece of information can spread quickly from user to user, making it difficult to stop its spread and retrieve it.

Mr Joseph Gan, president and co-founder of security solutions firm V-Key, said: “If the information is already uploaded online, on social media, a forum or something else, the issue is that other parties could have already downloaded or obtained the information.”

“This means that there will be others, other than the original leak, with the data.”

While it might be too late to undo the leak, Mr Bryan Tan, a lawyer from Pinsent Masons MPILay who specialises in technology law and data protection, said the authorities could chase down the data by monitoring where it cropped up online and following the digital trail.

Associate Professor Alan Chong of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies echoed this point, saying that this could be done by tracking any suspicious Internet Protocol (IP) addresses found to have accessed the data or even published it.

An IP address is a unique numerical label assigned to each device connected to a computer network which uses the Internet.



Prof Chong said: “They can try tracking all the suspect IP addresses and, hopefully, they can interrogate each of these leads.”

“It is like old-fashioned police work. When a crime has been committed, usually there is a trail that can be followed up.”

MOH said on Monday that following the discovery of disclosure of the HIV records, it “worked with relevant parties to disable access to the information”.

The latest incident reflects the danger of employees misusing their access to confidential data, said Mr Max Heinemeyer, director of threat-hunting at cyber-security solutions provider Darktrace.

He said: “The incident underlines how insiders continue to pose major safety risks, even if they themselves do not intend any harm or no longer work at the organisation.”

When asked what could be done should the data be found online

or the culprit identified, Mr Tan said there were a number of possible responses.

He said: “If it is online, there will be somewhere where the information is hosted and, if the host can be tracked, then under the law of confidentiality and even copyright law, the Government, as owner, can ask for it to be removed.”

Mr Tan added that if the culprit hosts the data on a website, it could be a breach of terms and conditions on the disclosure of confidential information, and the host would have grounds to remove it.

Even if the data is found to be hosted in another country, Mr Tan said that most countries have some form of legislation to remove confidential or proprietary content – although the specifics of this vary from country to country.

He also said that since a computer system was used to access the data, it could also be a computer misuse issue, and that the contin-

The stolen confidential data on the 14,200 people with HIV included names, contact details and medical information, said the Ministry of Health.

PHOTO: REUTERS

MR MAX HEINEMEYER, director of Darktrace.

MR JOSEPH GAN, president and co-founder of V-Key.

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FOLLOWING THE DIGITAL TRAIL

They can try tracking all the suspect IP addresses and, hopefully, they can interrogate each of these leads. It is like old-fashioned police work. When a crime has been committed, usually there is a trail that can be followed up.

”

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ALAN CHONG of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, on how the authorities can follow the digital trail to chase down the stolen data.

THREAT FROM INSIDERS

The incident underlines how insiders continue to pose major safety risks, even if they themselves do not intend any harm or no longer work at the organisation.

”

MR MAX HEINEMEYER, director of Darktrace.

ACCESS TO LEAKED DATA

If the information is already uploaded online, on social media, a forum or something else, the issue is that other parties could have already downloaded or obtained the information.

This means that there will be others, other than the original leak, with the data.

”

MR JOSEPH GAN, president and co-founder of V-Key.

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Beijing may be forced to grant concessions at trade talks

But observers say charges against Huawei are unlikely to derail critical trade negotiations

Tan Dawn Wei
China Bureau Chief
In Beijing

Fresh criminal charges brought against Huawei and its financial chief Meng Wanzhou will factor in the two-day trade negotiations between Washington and Beijing starting today, and may even force China's hand in granting certain concessions.

But they will not derail the critical talks aimed at reconciling deep differences between the two largest economies in the world, said analysts.

"China is on the defence when it comes to Huawei and Meng. It does not really have many cards to play with the Americans," said Associate Professor Li Mingjiang, coordinator of the China Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.

"The Chinese can provide political, moral, policy arguments to try and convince the Americans to be more lenient, but ultimately they believe the Americans have a tool and a leverage and they won't easily give up."

Deputy dean of Tsinghua University's School of Social Sciences Zhao Kejin said Chinese negotiators may request their American counterparts to treat the Huawei case in legal terms and not have it politicised.

"Since the US has brought charges against Huawei and Meng, it must have garnered sufficient evidence. If the evidence is truly compelling, the Chinese government may not necessarily interfere," he said, adding that Huawei is a private business and not a government entity.

And since US President Donald Trump and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping have committed to resolving the trade dispute, their officials will make sure those orders are carried out, said Professor Zhao.

Proceedings to extradite Meng to the US could take weeks or even months in Canada.

Yesterday, her lawyer Reid Weingarten said she "should not be a hostage" caught in the Sino-US rivalry.

"Our client, Sabrina Meng, should not be a pawn or a hostage in this relationship. Meng is an ethical and honourable businesswoman who has never spent a second of her life plotting to violate any US law, including the Iranian sanctions," said Mr Weingarten, using Meng's other name.

Angry reactions surfaced quickly on China's Twitter-like Weibo platform on news of the criminal charges, with netizens agitating for a showdown with the US.

"Some battles need to be waged, or we will always be led by the nose, and let others dictate the rules," wrote one Weibo user.

An editorial in the nationalistic Global Times described the US as "hysterically persecuting high-tech companies like Huawei", and urged the government to negotiate with the US. "It will be a setback for China's rise if Huawei, a high-tech giant among Chinese private enterprises, collapses under US pressure," it said.

The legal wranglings may have an impact on not just Huawei, but also the global development of next-generation cellular mobile communications, or 5G, of which the company is a leader in.

Already, Huawei faces bans and possible censure in the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Europe. A guilty verdict might convince more countries to exclude Huawei equipment in their 5G roll-out, say technology analysts.

Mr Tarun Pathak, an associate director of Counterpoint Technology Market Research, said Huawei has a "total-telecom" approach, which sees it developing in all areas within the information and communications technology environment, from silicon chips, devices, network infrastructure to cloud.

"No other industry player is doing anything similar," he said. "If operators have to radically rethink their suppliers and network architectures accordingly, it will likely cause delays in 5G launches."

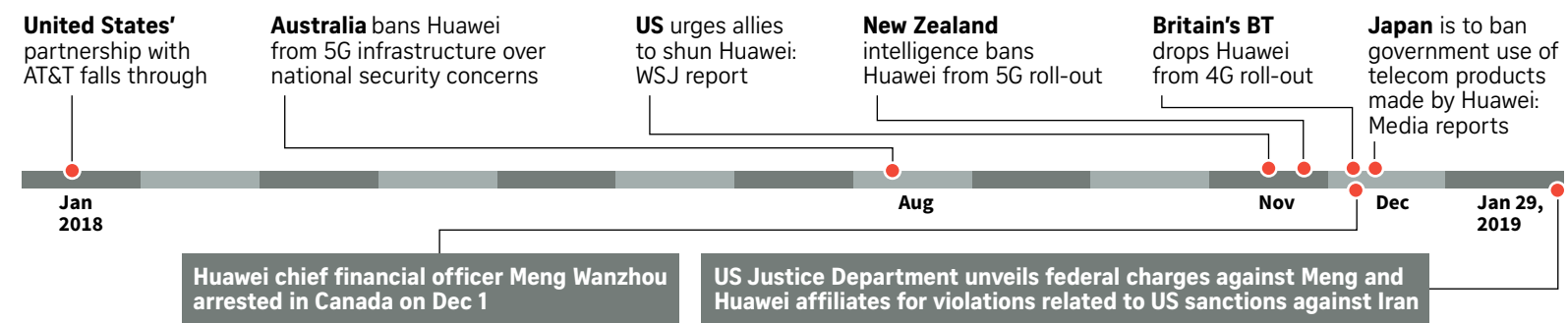
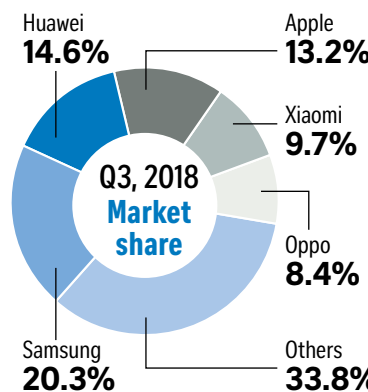
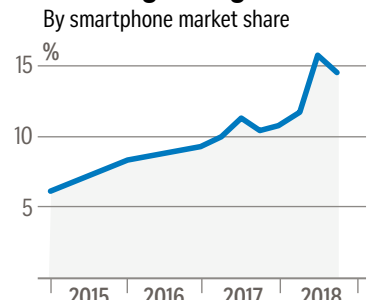
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Huawei under pressure



Pro-Beijing protesters in Hong Kong calling for the release of Huawei's Meng Wanzhou yesterday.

Recent global growth



US prosecutors have charged Huawei and its chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou with 13 counts of trade secret theft and bank fraud, among other crimes. Here is a look at some of the alleged evidence disclosed:

Offered cash for trade secrets

- Huawei had a formal programme to reward employees who successfully stole confidential information from other companies, said prosecutors.
- Employees posted what they stole on an internal Huawei website, or sent an encrypted e-mail to a special e-mail mailbox.
- Monthly bonuses were awarded to employees who had the most valuable stolen information, and the top three regions with the most valuable information were eligible for biannual bonuses.
- Two days after the formal policy was put in place, the director of human resources at Huawei USA e-mailed employees informing them that such behaviour was illegal in the United States.

- Another Huawei USA employee later stole one of the Tappy robot arms but returned it after the theft was discovered, claiming he had found it in his bag.

Covered up trade secret thefts

- After the Tappy theft attempts were discovered, Huawei assured an internal company investigation, and falsely told T-Mobile, that its employees had acted on their own in isolated incidents.
- Prosecutors said that in reality, their actions had been directed by Huawei and were part of a months-long drive to steal technical information about Tappy.

Defrauded banks to evade sanctions

- Huawei and its chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou repeatedly lied to several banks and the US government that Huawei no longer controlled its affiliate in Iran, Skycom, even though it did.
- Meng herself personally made a presentation in August 2013 to a bank executive, lying repeatedly about the relationship between Huawei and Skycom.
- This led US banks, which are generally prohibited from processing transactions related to Iran, to unknowingly break the law by continuing to provide banking services to Huawei.
- One bank cleared more than US\$100 million worth of Skycom-related transactions through the US between 2010 and 2014.

Covered up bank fraud

- Huawei tried to obstruct the US government's investigation into its bank fraud by making efforts to move witnesses who knew about Skycom to China, beyond US jurisdiction. It also concealed and destroyed Skycom evidence located in the US.

PHOTOS: BLOOMBERG, ZUMA WIRE STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS



Meng Wanzhou

Aussie telco's 5G mobile network becomes casualty of ban on firm

SYDNEY/SHAH ALAM • Australia's TPG Telecom said Monday that it has abandoned building its mobile telephone network because it relied on Huawei Technologies equipment that has been banned by Australia's government on security grounds.

The nascent network is the first commercial casualty in Australia of the ban announced last August, and comes as Western countries restrict market access to Huawei over allegations that China could use its equipment for espionage. Huawei denies the allegations.

The world's biggest telecoms equipment maker has been under siege since the arrest of its chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou in

Canada last month. The US Justice Department on Monday accused Huawei of bank fraud and conspiring to steal trade secrets from wireless network operator T-Mobile US.

Broadband Internet provider TPG said in a statement that it chose Huawei as a supplier because it offered a simple upgrade path from the fourth-generation (4G) network under construction to 5G.

"That upgrade path has now been blocked," TPG said. "It does not make commercial sense to invest further shareholder funds."

TPG said it made the decision now as the project had reached a point where it would have had to place new orders. It did not elaborate on the fate of the completed

part of the network, but said it does not expect any impact on this year's earnings guidance.

Huawei said in a statement that TPG's announcement was "extremely disappointing".

"Australians will now miss out on cheaper and more affordable mobile services," said spokesman Jeremy Mitchell.

The cancellation has cost TPG A\$100 million (\$96.9 million), but is widely seen as eliminating duplication under the A\$15 billion merger it has agreed with the Australian arm of Britain's Vodafone Group.

TPG agreed to its merger with Vodafone in August to challenge larger rivals Telstra and Optus,

owned by Singapore's telecommunications giant Singtel.

TPG's move adds to pressure that Huawei is facing globally after the US and its allies initiated measures to restrict market access for the Chinese company and compatriot ZTE Corp, citing espionage risk.

Australia's intelligence agencies feared that if mobile operators use Huawei's equipment, the company could develop a means of collecting data at the request of China's government – which Huawei has denied repeatedly.

Operators in Europe such as BT and Orange have already removed Huawei's equipment or taken steps to limit its future use, while Vodafone has paused its use.

In Australia, Vodafone and Optus, which use Huawei's 4G equipment, must now design 5G systems based only on Nokia or Ericsson technology, a process that TPG executive chairman David Teoh said would likely be costly.

In Malaysia, the government is waiting for an official report from the country's communications regulator before deciding on whether to ban Huawei from building its 5G infrastructure.

Communications and Multimedia Minister Gobind Singh Deo said yesterday that the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission is looking into the security concerns surrounding the telecommunications equipment manufac-

turer, and is preparing a report on the issue.

"Let us wait for them to come up with their report. We can take it from there," he said.

"When it comes to 5G, there are many views that have been put forward. The focus is for us to study the system and to make sure the system is secure because we anticipate this is a technology that is going to change things in the years to come."

Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad had previously said that the government would conduct a study before making a decision on Huawei's participation in building 5G infrastructure in Malaysia.

REUTERS, THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Cautious optimism of deal emerging as trade talks begin

But deep structural changes from China too fundamental to deliver, say analysts

Nirmal Ghosh
US Bureau Chief
In Washington

Chinese Vice-Premier Liu He is in Washington for two days of crucial talks with the United States aimed at staving off a deeper phase in the trade war that could begin on March 1 if no agreement is reached by then.

The talks starting today come after the US Justice Department unveiled charges against Chinese technology giant Huawei, its chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou and several subsidiaries on Monday. The charges include theft of trade secrets, obstruction of justice and bank fraud related to evading economic sanctions on Iran.

Separately, China is challenging US tariffs at the World Trade Organisation.

The clock on trade is ticking. China and the US are struggling to reach an agreement not only on narrowing the US' yawning trade deficit with China, but also on structural changes to the Chinese economy to, among other things, curb forced joint ventures with and technology transfer from US firms, and allow them more access to China's market.

Failure to strike a deal could see the US raise tariffs on US\$200 billion (S\$270 billion) worth of Chinese imports – from 10 per cent to 25 per cent – come March 1.

There is cautious optimism that an agreement will emerge.

"My baseline assumption is that very close to the deadline, we will come up with a deal that... at least allows both sides some breathing room by de-escalating hostilities," Professor Eswar Prasad, former China director at the International Monetary Fund, said in a speech in Washington last week.

China said yesterday it hoped the



Chinese Vice-Premier Liu He (above) will face US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer in the trade talks.

trade teams would "actively work together and follow the important consensus of the leaders of the two countries to achieve a mutually acceptable solution".

"I think this is the common expectation of the international community," Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told reporters.

For sure, nervous markets will be looking for positive signals. Yet, many analysts say the deep structural changes asked of China are too fundamental to deliver.

The trade talks, coming after official-level meetings in Beijing earlier this month, are part of negotiations agreed to by US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping last month – which led to a 90-day conditional truce in which neither side would raise tariffs.

"The two sides will... discuss China's pledge to purchase a substantial amount of goods and services from the United States," the White House said in a statement.

The US side is led by US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and the Chinese side by Mr Liu, who is a key economic adviser to Mr Xi.

The talks cover four broad areas. A relatively easy one is how much and what US products and produce China will commit to buying to nar-

row America's trade deficit. The second area is what China can do to show progress on deregulation.

The third addresses structural issues in China – market access, intellectual property issues and the China 2025 vision, which aims to make the country a global technology power by 2025. The fourth area is enforcement of any deal.

The last two are considered the most contentious.

On Monday, US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, who will take part in the talks, told journalists: "We do have another 30 days after this, so my expectation is we will make significant progress at these meetings, but I would just emphasise these are complicated issues."

Enforcement will be a topic on the agenda, he said. "We want to make sure that we expect when we get a deal, that deal will be enforced."

Since the Dec 1 meeting between the two presidents, China has taken several measures.

According to a compilation by trade and business consultancy McLarty Associates, these include approving imports of five genetically modified crops, the first-ever approved imports of American rice, large orders of soya beans, accelerated approval of foreign pharmaceutical drugs, cancelled or lowered tariffs on some imports, setting up of an intellectual property rights court under the Supreme Court and promises to review foreign investment laws.

Yesterday, Industry and Information Technology Minister Miao Wei said China has removed ratio limits to foreign capital investment in shipbuilding, aviation and other technical equipment manufacture.

China has done "more than usual, that is all positive", said McLarty Associates managing partner Kellie Meiman Hock. "The question at the end of the day is: Is it enough for Bob Lighthizer, and is it enough for Donald Trump at a time when he is concerned about markets?"

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• Additional reporting by Lim Yan Liang

S'pore climbs to third place in global ranking of least corrupt countries

Adrian Lim
Political Correspondent

Singapore has moved up three notches to third spot in an annual ranking of countries deemed to have the least corruption in the public sector, with Denmark and New Zealand ahead of it.

The Republic scored 85 on graft watchdog Transparency International's 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index, which uses a scale that goes from zero, for highly corrupt, to 100, for very clean.

The Transparency International index released yesterday also showed that, globally, most countries continued to fail in reining in corruption significantly, said the Berlin-based organisation.

Similar to 2017, more than two-thirds of the countries scored below 50, with an average score of only 43.

Since 2012, only 20 countries, including Estonia and Ivory Coast, have significantly improved their scores, while 16 have significantly declined, including Australia, Chile and Malta, noted Transparency International.

It also highlighted that the United States had dropped out of the top 20 countries on the index for the first time since 2011. The US scored 71, down four points.

"The low score comes at a time when the US is experiencing threats to its system of checks and balances as well as an erosion of ethical norms at the highest levels of power," Transparency International said.

The Corruption Perceptions Index, started in 1995, ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, according to experts

and business people. It draws on 13 surveys and expert assessments to derive a score for each country.

Singapore got 85, improving on its 2017 score of 84, and tying with Finland, Sweden and Switzerland for third spot. Leader Denmark scored 88, and New Zealand 87.

Norway was in seventh place with a score of 84, followed by the Netherlands (82), Canada (81) and Luxembourg (81).

Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) director Denis Tang said Singapore's public service "continues to be recognised as one of the most efficient and cleanest in the world".

"Incidence of public sector corruption remains low, with an average of eight public sector employees prosecuted for corruption and related offences over the last three years," Mr Tang said in a statement.

Singapore's good standing is also attested to by other global indicators, the CPIB noted.

In the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy's 2018 Report on Corruption in Asia, for example, Singapore is the least corrupt country in the region, a position it has held since 1995, the CPIB said.

Lawyer Wilson Ang, a partner with global law firm Norton Rose Fulbright, said Singapore's legal framework plays a role in fighting corruption. Mr Ang, who heads the firm's Asia regulatory compliance and investigations practice, highlighted the introduction of the deferred prosecution agreement last year as one example.

Under the agreement, a corporation charged by a prosecutor may have the charge deferred, on condition it agrees to pay a financial penalty and abide by several conditions, including supervision of its practices for a period of time.

Least-corrupt countries

The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and business people.

Rank	Country	CPI* 2018
1	Denmark	88
2	New Zealand	87
3	Finland	85
3	Singapore	85
3	Sweden	85
3	Switzerland	85
7	Norway	84
8	Netherlands	82
9	Canada	81
9	Luxembourg	81

*On a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean

Source: TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL'S CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Mr Ang said: "The move signals that Singapore is serious about stamping out corruption. In cases where private sector businesses are making the payment of bribes to government officials, the deferred prosecution agreement targets one half of the equation, which is the supply side of the bribe."

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Sports Hub's Oon caught between a rock and a hard place

CEO's shock resignation highlights tensions between social objectives and profit motive

Lester Wong

Envisioned as a leading example of a successful public-private partnership, the Singapore Sports Hub has been anything but in practice.

Mr Oon Jin Teik, who on Monday announced his shock resignation as Sports Hub chief executive after just a year in the role, became the latest to get caught up in the delicate balancing act between the public sector's social objectives and the private sector's profit motive.

The former national swimmer declined to comment yesterday, but

The Straits Times understands that there was a disagreement between him and the SportsHub Pte Ltd (SHPL) board on the direction of the Sports Hub.

SHPL, a private consortium comprising four equity partners, operates the \$1.33 billion facility.

National sports agency Sport Singapore regularly meets SHPL over operational and programming matters but is not involved in key decision-making processes.

Under the arrangement, SHPL bore the costs of constructing the Sports Hub, with the Government making annual payments of \$193.7

million over a period of 25 years starting from 2010.

Mr Oon, the Sports Hub's third chief executive, is the only Singaporean among SHPL's six directors, according to the company's register of directors.

SHPL had previously clashed with public stakeholders under Mr Oon's predecessor Manu Sawhney, including over setting a \$26 million price tag on 35 extra rehearsal days for the 2016 National Day Parade.

Mr Oon, 55, was thus seen as an inspired choice for the role, having served as the CEO of SportSG's predecessor, the Singapore Sports Council, from 2004 to 2010, before moving to the other side of the fence as a senior executive officer at Hyflux from 2011 to 2014, and then as the Sports Hub's chief

operating officer from 2014.

In an interview with ST last year, Mr Oon said the burden upon him was to marry the Government's social objectives with the private sector's economic objectives, but made clear his priority was to serve all Singaporeans.

"The prices (to watch top entertainment and sports events) are not cheap and if I have concerts or football every weekend, I would be serving only a certain segment of people. That is not my mission," he said.

"I need to have a blend of activities on the (Sports Hub) calendar which can serve everybody."

He had also agreed on a tie-up last March with the Football Association of Singapore for 10 football matches a year for three years featuring either the various national teams or do-

mestic clubs, which he called "not a commercial deal".

No figures were revealed, but it is understood that the previously prohibitive costs for FAS were no longer an issue.

A former Sports Hub partner who has worked with both Mr Oon and Mr Sawhney said there was "more room for negotiation" with Mr Oon.

For example, instead of paying the full rental rate for a facility, one could "barter trade" – to pay a lower rate and partner the Hub in coming up with community activities.

But the pressures of rehabilitating an already fraught relationship appear to have made Mr Oon's position untenable, according to another source with knowledge of the matter. The uneasy alliance between SHPL and SportSG has been appar-

ent since the Hub was officially opened in 2014, with the latter not afraid to signal displeasure publicly.

Responding strongly to issues with the sandy surface of the Hub's pitch in October 2014, SportSG CEO Lim Teck Yin had called the pitch a "significant disappointment" and said that SHPL would be held "accountable for the outcomes of their next actions".

In its statement after news of Mr Oon's resignation broke, SportSG again said it would "continue to hold (SHPL) accountable for the delivery of a first-class and vibrant sports, entertainment and lifestyle hub for Singaporeans".

Last year, the Sports Hub hosted more than 210 events and welcomed more than three million visitors.

Public-private partnerships have seen success before in Singapore, most notably between PUB and the private sector for the Republic's four desalination plants as well as a fifth due next year.

But desalination plants do not serve the social functions that stadiums do.

"Private stakeholders want to see a return on their investment through events that can earn higher returns like concerts with international stars," said National Institute of Education physical education and sports science assistant professor Leng Ho Keat.

"But these events may not be what the public and the Government expect of a sports stadium.

"By scheduling a large number of non-sports events, the original purpose for building the Sports Hub will necessarily be eroded."

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Ex-City Harvest leader gets 13 months' jail over escape attempt

Shaffiq Alkhatib

Former City Harvest Church (CHC) leader Chew Eng Han was sentenced yesterday to 13 months in jail after attempting to leave Singapore unlawfully.

He will serve the term after completing his earlier sentence of three years and four months in jail for his role in the misuse of church funds.

Chew, 58, was convicted last month of attempting to leave Singapore illegally from an

unauthorised point of departure.

District Judge Victor Yeo also found him guilty of attempting to defeat the course of justice by boarding a motorised boat at Pulau Ubin jetty on Feb 21 last year to try to avoid his earlier jail sentence. Chew committed the offences a day before he was to begin serving the jail term.

He was caught at sea to the northeast of Pulau Ubin, close to the boundary between Singapore and Malaysian waters.

The court heard that this was the first case in which an individual



Chew Eng Han, 58, will serve the term after completing his jail sentence for his role in the misuse of church funds.

was charged under Section 204A of the Penal Code over an attempt to avoid serving a jail term.

According to the online statutes, Section 204A involves parties "obstructing, preventing, perverting or

defeating (the) course of justice".

Yesterday, the judge said: "The accused had explored various avenues to leave Singapore since October 2017, and his attempt to leave Singapore illegally on that day in question was thwarted by the vigilance of the Police Coast Guard.

"Any sentence imposed by the court for this charge must serve as a sufficient deterrent to like-minded offenders who would have no qualms to attempt to defeat the course of justice by avoiding serving their sentences."

During the trial, Deputy Public Prosecutors Christopher Ong and Eugene Sng stated that Chew had admitted he wanted to leave Singapore as he "felt injustice for (his) High Court case".

Yesterday, DPP Ong urged the judge to sentence Chew to 15 months in jail. But defence lawyer Adrian Wee pleaded for him to be jailed for six months. He also said that the former church leader was remorseful.

In his grounds of decision, Judge Yeo said: "I was not entirely convinced of his remorsefulness, given

that the accused remains adamant that his actions were only 'morally and ethically wrong'."

In March last year, Chew started serving his sentence for the misuse of church funds. Five other CHC leaders who were also convicted of misusing the funds – including founder-pastor Kong Hee – had begun serving their terms in April 2017.

Three people linked to Chew's escape bid were dealt with in court last year. Singaporean fish farm owner Tan Poh Teck, 53, was sentenced to 27 weeks in jail. Two Malaysian men – private tour guide Tan Kim Ho, 42, and freelance driver Khoo Kea Leng, 45 – were each sentenced to six months in jail.

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3m-long python shocks passers-by in Orchard

Tee Zhuo

Some people outside Tang Plaza in Orchard Road were in for a slithery shock yesterday morning.

A python, about 3m long, was spotted under a stone bench outside the Orchard Road MRT station exit near Tangs.

Housewife Tess Fernando, 49, said her son saw it on his way to school at around 8.20am, and sent her a photo of the snake.

"I went down to see it for myself. It was huge," she told The Straits Times, adding that a large crowd had gathered by the time she arrived.

In a video provided by Ms Fernando, at least five men can be seen struggling with the large snake as it thrashes about, resisting capture.

A passer-by, who wished to be known only as Ms Goh, said she saw staff from a pest control company trying to remove the reptile. A security guard from Tang Plaza helped out as well, she added.

"There was some difficulty in (putting) the snake into a bag," said the 27-year-old retail executive.

In a video provided by Ms Goh, seven to eight men can be seen struggling to get the snake into a brown bag. But their attempt failed.

In some videos, three men are seen carrying the python away.

The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) told ST that the python was removed and handed over to Wildlife Reserves Singapore.

Some of the men handling the snake wore shirts indicating they were from Anticimex, a pest control firm. But Anticimex said it could not comment on the incident.

In some videos, the snake appears to attack one of the men. The Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (Acres) believes the man was bitten.

"The snake was stepped on and



A 3m-long snake struggling as several men attempt to capture it. The python outside Tang Plaza was eventually removed and handed over to Wildlife Reserves Singapore. PHOTO: FACEBOOK/RABBIKHAN KHAN

handled very roughly," said Acres deputy chief executive Kalai Vaman, adding that snakes are wild animals protected by law.

Citing video clips that show the snake being dragged, veteran wildlife expert Subaraj Rajathurai said: "You call pest control for rats.

Snakes, which are wild animals, are not pests. These firms are not usually trained to handle such animals," said the founder of Strix Wildlife Consultancy.

He said it is likely the snake emerged from the drainage system connected to the underground Stamford

Canal that runs along Orchard Road. AVA said it is investigating the alleged mishandling of the snake, and added that cruelty to animals is an offence under the Animals and Birds Act. It said it "will not hesitate to take enforcement actions against offenders".

AVA issues guidelines on proper handling of snakes to all pest control and wildlife management agencies.

Acres urged members of the public to call its wildlife rescue hotline on 9783-7782 should they see wild animals in distress. AVA also advised the public not to approach,

disturb, feed or try to catch any wildlife, including snakes.

More information can be found at AVA's website. The public can also call AVA on 1800-476-1600 to give feedback or to request assistance.

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Measures to tackle graft

The Pakatan Harapan alliance toppled long-ruling Barisan Nasional that was reeling from a spate of major scandals, including 1MDB.

These are among the measures being launched by the Malaysian government as it tries to eliminate graft:

- Review how appointments to key government posts are made.
- Introduce new laws on political funding for politicians and political parties.
- Politicians and high-ranking civil servants must declare their assets.
- Enhance credibility of legal and judicial system.
- Improve corporate governance.

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad joined Deputy Prime Minister Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and Chief Secretary Ismail Bakar to pose with a book outlining anti-corruption legislation during the launch of the National Anti-Corruption Plan in Putrajaya yesterday. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

KL launches ambitious plan to eliminate graft in 5 years

Scrutiny on how key posts are decided, laws on political funding among new measures

Nadirah H. Rodzi
Malaysia Correspondent
In Putrajaya

Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who is sometimes blamed for tolerating corruption and the rise of cronyism during his first stint as prime minister, yesterday launched an ambitious plan to make the country corruption-free in five years.

The eight-month-old government, which stormed to power amid voters' anger over the massive 1MDB or 1Malaysia Development Berhad graft scandal and other corruption cases, unveiled yesterday

the wide-ranging National Anti-Corruption Plan (NACP).

Tun Dr Mahathir said at its launch that the Pakatan Harapan (PH) government will review how appointments to key government posts are made, introduce new laws on political funding, and will require politicians and high-ranking civil servants to declare their assets.

He said the plan is about curbing corruption and not about punishing past wrongdoings.

"Before May 9, 2018, many Malaysians were sick with instances of widespread corruption taking place in the country involving the government, which has been labelled internationally as a kleptocracy – a very shameful label. This label was not created by me or my government. It was given by the foreign media when the foreign authorities discovered the involvement of past leaders in money laundering, graft and cheating.

"This label was not created by me or my government. It was given by the foreign media when the foreign authorities discovered the involvement of past leaders in money laun-

SICK OF CORRUPTION

dering, graft and cheating."

This is not the first time the government has launched an ambitious move to curb corruption.

The Abdullah Badawi administration in 2004 launched the five-year National Integrity Plan (NIP) and gave more powers to the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission, projects that were passed to the next government led by Najib Razak.

But Dr Mahathir said yesterday that the NIP had failed to reduce the "culture of corruption".

Dr Mahathir himself has sometimes been accused of tolerating corruption and the rise of cronyism in his 22 years as prime minister until 2003, with the rise of tycoons associated with his administration.

But this time around, he is leading a different government, with some of the PH leaders in his Cabinet known for their strong reformist credentials. Reflecting the

wide support of the anti-graft fight, the two biggest opposition parties attended the NACP's launch in Putrajaya – Parti Islam SeMalaysia president Abdul Hadi Awang and Umno's acting president Mohamad Hasan.

The previous Najib administration was toppled in the May 9 general election after being embroiled in the scandal involving state fund 1MDB.

Najib is facing a slew of graft-related charges, as is former deputy prime minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, former federal territories minister Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor, and former chief of the Federal Land Development Authority (Felda) agency Isa Samad.

Meanwhile, Transparency International Malaysia president Akhbar Satar said yesterday that Malaysia has edged up one position in the organisation's latest global index on corruption to 61st position among 180 countries.

Critics of PH, however, have expressed concern over reports of graft within the ruling coalition itself. A recent by-election in Cameron Highlands in Pahang state was marred by accusations of vote-buying. Dr Mahathir responded last week by saying that the reports over graft cases are on the rise because people feel freer to report such shady incidents.

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No decision on East Coast rail link, talks ongoing: Mahathir

PETALING JAYA • The Malaysian government has not made any decision regarding the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) project, said Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad yesterday night, in an apparent flip-flop days after other senior officials indicated that the project had been scrapped.

"At this moment, no final decision has been made. Some decisions were made but we have to find a better solution.

"We are still negotiating," said Tun Dr Mahathir.

He added: "We feel that we should give time to both sides (Malaysia and China) to come up with a solution to this. There may be other options – we are open."

Dr Mahathir also said his administration is still studying the costs involved in the multibillion-dollar project. "Apparently, there are offers by others which will cost less. The previous government gave a very high estimate on ECRL," he told reporters yesterday evening.

IT'S NOT FINAL

At this moment, no final decision has been made... We are still negotiating.

PRIME MINISTER MAHATHIR MOHAMAD, on the East Coast Rail Link project.

The RM81 billion (\$27 billion) ECRL project was approved by Dr Mahathir's predecessor Najib Razak in October 2016.

However, work on the 688km railway line – which is expected to link the east and west coasts of Peninsular Malaysia – has been suspended since last July after the Pakatan Harapan government took office following its electoral victory last May, promising to review the country's large-scale infrastructure projects.



The Straits Times reported last week that the government had cancelled the original contract with the state-owned China Communications Construction Company (CCCC). The government is said to be seeking to halve the estimated project cost to RM40 billion.

Earlier yesterday, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would be "impoverished" if the government proceeds with the project.

"We are burdened with heavy debts. We seek understanding

from all parties. We will be impoverished by the project if we go on," he told reporters after launching the National Anti-Corruption Plan.

"The huge compensation for cancelling it is not as huge as the amount we have to carry for the next 30 years," he said.

"It is not because we want to frustrate or throw out the contract; it is because we are really tight in terms of finance," said Dr Mahathir.

THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

A billboard sign publicising the RM81 billion (\$27 billion) East Coast Rail Link project at Kota Sultan Ahmad Shah in Kuantan, Pahang. PHOTO: ST FILE

Beijing releases song to woo KL

KUALA LUMPUR • China is hoping a song will remind Malaysia of warmer relations in the past, days after a US\$20 billion (\$27 billion) project that it backed was seemingly scrapped by the South-east Asian nation.

The Chinese Embassy in Kuala Lumpur released the song on Monday on its Facebook page to commemorate 45 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Titled Bahu Kiri, or "left shoulder" in Malay, and sung in Mandarin, the lyrics speak of a friendship against all odds while referring to the South China Sea as a "heart-rending" and reminding the two nations that they share one shoreline.

"My right shoulder protects you from the wind and the rain, my left shoulder is for you to hang on to," the song goes.

The timing of its release coincided with Malaysian officials indicating in recent days the scrapping of the East Coast Rail Link project, with China Communications Construction Company as the main contractor.

But Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said last evening that the project had in fact not been cancelled, and that the two sides were "still negotiating".

The Chinese firm took steps last Thursday to rationalise its workforce following instructions from the Malaysian Finance Ministry last year to suspend related contracts.

The Chinese Embassy is expected to release the Malay version of the song soon. BLOOMBERG

4 key ministers contesting Thai elections step down

Move follows months of criticism of quartet using posts to favour their pro-junta party

Tan Hui Yee
Indochina Bureau Chief
In Bangkok

Four key ministers contesting Thailand's March 24 election resigned yesterday as political parties began showcasing their candidates and campaign platforms in earnest.

The quartet – Industry Minister Uttama Savanayana, Science and Technology Minister Suwit Maesincee, Commerce Minister Sontirat Sontijirawong and Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Kobsak Pootrakool – tendered their resignation after months of criticism that they were using their positions to favour their Palang Pracharath Party, a newly formed party in which they hold key leadership positions.

The Palang Pracharath Party is widely expected to push for Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha to keep his job after the election.

"Now we are ready – not ready for ourselves but for the country," Mr Sontirat, the party's secretary-general, told reporters yesterday.

The ministers' resignations will take effect today.

The upcoming election will end



The resignations of (from left) Commerce Minister Sontirat Sontijirawong, Industry Minister Uttama Savanayana, Science and Technology Minister Suwit Maesincee and Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Kobsak Pootrakool take effect today. All four are leaders of the Palang Pracharath Party. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

the military rule that has been in place since 2014, when then army chief Prayut led a coup that toppled the Pheu Thai Party-led government.

A new Constitution enacted in 2017 will make it very difficult for Pheu Thai to win with a sweeping majority like it did during the last election in 2011.

Thailand's future prime minister also need not contest in the general election. Under transitional rules, once a person has been nominated by a political party, he can be made premier if he wins the

majority vote in the combined Upper and Lower Houses.

Most of the appointed senators, who are now being selected, will be picked in some form by the ruling junta.

In an interview with The Straits Times last month, Dr Uttama, leader of the Palang Pracharath Party, had said: "Thailand needs a strong and capable leader... during this period of reform and transformation of Thailand. And I think Prime Minister Prayut is suitable for that."

The current military government has heavily promoted a next-gener-

ation industrial and investment hub dubbed the Eastern Economic Corridor by the Gulf of Thailand.

Critics charge that it has not done enough to lift rural incomes in a sustainable fashion.

According to the latest World Bank report this month, strengthening private consumption and private investment helped push Thailand's economic growth up to an estimated 4.1 per cent last year, despite trade tensions between China and the United States dimming the global outlook.

Growth is expected to slow down slightly to 3.8 per cent this year under external pressure, said the World Bank.

Over 100 political parties have registered with the Election Commission so far. Those wanting to sign up candidates for the coming election as well as nominate people for premiership have to do so from next Monday to Feb 8. Enthusiastic voters on Monday flooded a website to register for advance voting, causing it to crash briefly.

Meanwhile, key politicians have hit the streets.

Former prime minister and Democrat Party leader Abhisit Vejjajiva has been wading through city markets, handing out leaflets to diners tucking into their chicken rice.

Pheu Thai's chief of strategy and de facto leader Sudarat Keyuraphan is making the rounds alongside party stalwart Chadchart Sittipunt, a popular former transport minister-turned-businessman.

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Two victims at the Kuala Lumpur market stampede receiving aid. Almost 1,000 people were there to get free food coupons. PHOTO: THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

2 women die in KL market stampede for free food coupons

KUALA LUMPUR • A stampede in a Malaysian market that killed two elderly women as people rushed to collect free food coupons will be investigated by police, an official said yesterday.

Almost 1,000 people descended on the indoor market in Kuala

Lumpur on Monday to get their hands on 200 vouchers for a buffet meal during next month's Lunar New Year festivities.

Two women aged 85 and 78 collapsed in the crush.

Attempts by paramedics to resuscitate them failed and they died at

the scene, police said.

Two other women who fainted during the rush to collect the vouchers, which were being given away by those running the market, were revived.

Such stampedes are uncommon in Malaysia, which is relatively af-

fluent in comparison to other parts of South-east Asia.

A security guard described chaotic scenes, telling The Star newspaper people were "pushing each other" to collect the coupons, and some were screaming.

"We will investigate the cause of death and also whether the organisers had put in place sufficient safety measures," local police chief Shaharuddin Abdullah said.

The Lunar New Year is a major celebration in Malaysia, where about a quarter of the 32 million inhabitants are ethnic Chinese.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

DAP politician appointed to Islamic agency board

KUALA LUMPUR • A Muslim politician from the Chinese-based ruling party has been appointed to the board of trustees of the Islamic Propagation Foundation of Malaysia (Yadim).

The bold move by the Democratic Action Party (DAP) politician is seen by observers as one which may unsettle Malay Muslims, most of whom have yet to give the Pakatan Harapan (PH) govern-

ment their support.

The politician, Mr Sheikh Omar Ali, 33, holds a Bachelors degree in Usuluddin (Islamic studies) from Universiti Malaya, majoring in dakwah (propagation), local media reported yesterday. He left Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) to join the DAP in 2005, and is today the Johor state Cabinet minister for Information, Entrepreneurship Development, Co-operatives and Creative Economy.

Yadim is an agency under the Prime Minister's Department that coordinates Islamic propagation involving government agencies and non-governmental organisations.

The appointment of Mr Sheikh Omar was announced by Datuk Seri Dr Muzahid Yusof Rawa, Malaysia's de facto Islamic Affairs Minister, yesterday.

"Sheikh Omar was appointed as someone with a religious education background," Malaysiakini cited him as saying. "There should be no negative perception... he's a Muslim, he has merit, and contributed some good ideas in the past," he told reporters.

Critics of the PH government, of which the DAP is a member, may be discomfited by the appointment, especially as the two main opposition parties – Umno and PAS –

have been pushing the line that the DAP is anti-Islam.

Former deputy Islamic affairs minister and Umno Youth chief Asyraf Wajdi Dusuki said yesterday that Mr Sheikh Omar is from a party that has never recognised Islam as Malaysia's official religion. Islamic institutions in Malaysia, he claims, are under threat from the "DAP-dominated" PH government.

News of the appointment comes as the four-party ruling alliance is still struggling to attract more Malay support, eight months after winning the general election.

PH's candidate from the DAP lost badly in the Cameron Highlands by-election held last Saturday, as Malay voters mostly backed Umno despite last-minute campaigning by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

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Apple FaceTime bug allows people to eavesdrop remotely

SAN FRANCISCO • A newly discovered FaceTime bug lets people hear and even see those they are reaching out to on iPhones using the video calling software, sparking privacy fears.

The bug, initially outlined by Apple product and review website 9to5Mac.com, was reported by several media outlets.

A video posted at Twitter account @BmManski showing how simple it is to take advantage of the flaw and listen in on an iPhone being called using FaceTime logged nearly two million views and was shared 14,000 times by late Monday in California.

When a phone number is dialled on FaceTime – the iPhone's Internet-based voice and video calling feature – the caller can swipe up from the bottom of the screen and tap an option to add a person, according to video demonstrations.

If a caller enters their number as the added caller, a group call begins even though the person being called has not answered yet.

The caller can then eavesdrop on the person being called, and in some demonstrations peek through the front-facing camera. Declining a call breaks the connection.

"Disable FaceTime for now until Apple fixes," Twitter co-founder and chief executive Jack Dorsey advised in a tweet.

Mr Dorsey's message included a forwarded post by technologist Andy Baio.

"Want to see a really bad bug?" Mr Baio asked in his post. "You can FaceTime any iOS device running 12.1 and listen in remotely – WITHOUT THE OTHER PERSON ANSWERING THE CALL."

An Apple statement quoted in United States media said it was aware of the issue and has "identified a fix that will be released in a software update later this week".

An Apple support page also listed Group FaceTime calling as "temporarily unavailable" due to an ongoing "issue".

Users can disable FaceTime on iPhones, iPads, and iPod touches in settings and on the Mac under the Preferences tab in the FaceTime application.

New York governor Andrew Cuomo issued a statement saying the "FaceTime bug is an egregious breach of privacy that puts New Yorkers at risk". He said he is concerned that the flaw could be "exploited for unscrupulous purposes".

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, BLOOMBERG



In a photo sent by his lawyer Achmad Michdan, Bashir was seen lying on a bed at Cipto Mangunkusumo hospital in Central Jakarta, undergoing an ultrasound test to detect blood clots. PHOTO: ACHMAD MICH DAN

Bashir briefly hospitalised because of swollen feet

Condition is result of malfunctioning of the valves in the blood vessels, says doctor

Wahyudi Soeriaatmadja
Indonesia Correspondent
In Jakarta

Convicted terrorist Abu Bakar Bashir was briefly hospitalised yesterday after apparently suffering swollen feet.

The sickly 80-year-old radical cleric is currently serving a 15-year jail sentence in Gunung Sindur prison, outside Jakarta, for his role in helping to fund a paramilitary training camp for militants in Aceh.

Dr Jose Rizal, a volunteer doctor who visits and treats Bashir in prison, said he was suffering from chronic venous insufficiency, which usually leads to swelling in the legs.

The condition is the result of the malfunctioning of the valves in the blood vessels, which causes blood to flow back into the legs rather than return to the heart. Over time, the condition can be painful.

Dr Rizal is from the Medical Emergency Rescue Committee, a non-profit organisation set up in Indonesia.

In photos sent by his lawyer Achmad Michdan, Bashir was seen lying on a bed at Cipto Mangunkusumo hospital in Central Jakarta, undergoing an ultrasound test to detect blood clots.

Bashir was sent back to prison several hours later with his lawyer saying that he did not need to be hospitalised. Mr Achmad did not

elaborate.

President Joko Widodo recently decided to release the spiritual leader of South-east Asia terrorist group Jemaah Islamiah (JI) on humanitarian grounds because of his deteriorating health.

The decision however triggered an uproar, forcing Mr Joko to backpedal on the unconditional release since word emerged that an unrepentant Bashir did not sign a letter to pledge allegiance to the nation and to the state ideology, Pancasila, both of which were among the basic requirements for anyone seeking parole in Indonesia.

Mr Joko said he had left it to Bashir and his family to decide on this, stressing that the government must uphold all the existing laws and regulations.

Bashir was expected to have walked free from prison this week.

JI was responsible for the 2002 Bali bombings, Indonesia's deadliest terrorist attack in which 202 people were killed, 88 of whom were Australians.

The JI network, formed in the early 1990s by Bashir, was detected in 2001. Many Singaporean JI members studied with him at a school he set up in Ulu Tiram, Johor. He also radicalised Malaysians, including bomb expert Azahari Husin, who was killed in 2005 by anti-terror police, and Noordin Mohammed Top, who was killed in 2009.

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Pakistan's top court upholds farm worker's blasphemy acquittal

ISLAMABAD • Pakistan's Supreme Court yesterday upheld the acquittal of a Christian woman who spent years on death row after being convicted of blasphemy, dismissing a petition filed by Islamists who have called for her execution.

"On merit, this petition is dismissed," Chief Justice Asif Saeed

Khosa said in court, adding that the petitioners, led by a village prayer leader, had failed to point out any mistake in the original judgment.

Ms Asia Bibi, a farm worker, was convicted in 2010 of making derogatory remarks about Islam after neighbours working in the fields with her objected to her drinking water from their glass because she was not Muslim.

Her conviction was overturned in October, prompting protests from religious hardliners calling for her death and demanding that the government prevent her from leaving the country.

Under pressure from days of protests in the capital, Islamabad, and other cities, the government agreed to stop Ms Bibi leaving the country until the Supreme Court heard a review petition.

Ms Bibi, who spent eight years on death row, has been in hiding since the Supreme Court freed her in October. She has always denied



Pakistani Christian Asia Bibi putting her thumb impression as a signature on the appeal papers against her death sentence in 2010. Pakistan's Supreme Court upheld its decision to acquit the farm worker of blasphemy charges yesterday. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

committing blasphemy.

In remarks to the court, Chief Justice Khosa was severely critical of the petitioners' attempt to have the judgment reversed and said Ms Bibi had been convicted on the basis of false evidence, pointing to discrepancies in testimony presented in the original case.

"You think we give the death sentence to someone on the basis of false evidence?" Chief Justice Khosa asked, before adding: "Such lies were told that one statement

doesn't match with another.

"Please point out any error in our judgment and we're ready to rectify it," he said. "You start declaring someone deserves to be killed just on the basis of false evidence."

Hours before the Supreme Court announced its decision, Mr Shafeeq Ameen, acting head of the hardline Tehreek-e Labaik group which led the protests last year, issued a new warning to the court not to rule in favour of the "blasphemer".

Mr Ameen was not immediately

available for comment after the ruling.

Ms Bibi's case attracted headlines around the world last year, highlighting Pakistan's strict anti-blasphemy laws, which campaigners have urged the government to repeal.

If allowed to do so, Ms Bibi is expected to seek asylum abroad. In November, Canadian Premier Justin Trudeau said his country was in talks with Pakistan about helping her. REUTERS

Suu Kyi's NLD clashes with military over Constitution reform

NAYPYITAW • Myanmar's ruling party clashed with military lawmakers yesterday as it proposed steps towards changing the Constitution, its biggest challenge in nearly three years to the army's power over politics as enshrined in the charter.

Military Members of Parliament, clad in green uniforms, rose to their feet and stood in silence as Parliament voted to approve the first stage of a proposal to form a committee on amending the Constitution.

The proposal could foment tension between the army and Ms Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD). Both have

been at loggerheads over the charter since the party's historic landslide election win in 2015.

The surprise bid to reform the Constitution comes as both civilian and military leaders face growing international pressure over an army crackdown on Rohingya Muslims in 2017.

Constitutional reform was a central pillar of the NLD's platform ahead of the 2015 general election, but little progress has been made as its leaders have proved reluctant to confront the military.

With another election looming in 2020, analysts see yesterday's

move as an effort to shore up support for Ms Suu Kyi's party and deliver on election pledges.

"It is the election promise," Mr Ye Htut, an NLD MP, told Reuters ahead of the vote.

Nobel laureate Suu Kyi's party commands a large majority in the two houses of Parliament.

But the 2008 Constitution, drafted during military rule, guarantees the army a quarter of seats and any change to the charter needs a vote of more than 75 per cent of members, giving the army an effective veto.

The Constitution also blocks Ms

Suu Kyi from becoming president.

NLD lawmaker Aung Kyi Nyunt, who submitted an "emergency proposal" to discuss a committee that could propose amendments, said the Constitution was "not in line with the democratic system" and the "desires of the people" should not be ignored. After the Speaker agreed to put the proposal to a vote, green-clad military lawmakers rose to their feet and stood for several minutes in silence.

The NLD won the vote 394-17.

Discussions on the committee are expected to continue next month.

Brigadier-General Maung Maung, a senior military official, said the NLD had not acted "in line with the law". "We don't say not to amend," he told reporters.

"They can amend but they must do it according to procedure... What kind of law will that committee analyse? How broad is the authority of the committee?" REUTERS

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Clockwise from left: Cricket ramen, an insect alcoholic drink, and Lisa, a cockroach from Africa that Mr Shinohara "dated" for a year. PHOTOS: INSTAGRAM/ Y.SHINO.EARTH

Scared of cockroaches? They don't bug him, he 'dated' and ate one

One man in Japan has been promoting eating insects, also known as entomophagy, but it seems his fondness for bugs extends beyond his dinner plate.

Mr Yuta Shinohara, 25, has always loved nature and has been eating insects since he was young.

He organises insect-eating events in Japan with dishes that include a bug cocktail, insect pastries and ramen with crickets and mealworms.

The entomophagist revealed in a video interview with Asian Boss published last Wednesday that he only began opening up about his interest when he was 19.

He explained that after the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) promoted eating insects for food security, he became comfortable with "coming out" about his love for bugs.

Mr Shinohara revealed that he "dated", for a year, a cockroach which he named Lisa. She was farm-raised and bought from Africa.

He said the love was "platonic".

He also said that he enjoyed her company so much that he believed they could communicate. The relationship was short-lived because she died.

Upon her death, he ate her "with reverence".



"So now Lisa lives in my heart and continues living as part of my body," Mr Shinohara said. He also called her his "first love".

He clarified that insects are not the only part of his diet and dispelled misconceptions about their taste.

He explained that how an insect would taste depends on its diet — one that he recommended was caterpillars which eat cherry blossoms because they taste like rice cake. PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Mr Yuta Shinohara organises insect-eating events in Japan with dishes that include a bug cocktail, insect pastries and ramen with crickets and mealworms. PHOTO: INSTAGRAM/ Y.SHINO.EARTH

Avoid sugary food to fight fatty liver: Study

Fat, inflammation sharply less when intake of added sugar is limited, new research shows

NEW YORK • Overweight children with fatty liver disease sharply reduced the amount of fat and inflammation in their livers by cutting soft drinks, fruit juices and foods with added sugars from their diets, a rigorous new study found.

The new research, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association last week, suggests that limiting sugary foods and drinks may be a promising lifestyle strategy to help alleviate the condition linked to the obesity crisis that is spreading rapidly in adults and children.

About 80 million to 100 million Americans have non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, which causes the liver to swell with dangerous levels of fat. Roughly seven million of those are adolescents and teenagers.

Fatty liver disease typically has few symptoms and many people are not aware that they have it.

But fatty liver disease raises the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes and heart disease. It can also progress to a more severe condition called non-alcoholic steatohepatitis, a leading cause of liver cancer and cirrhosis.

Current guidelines call for children who have fatty liver disease to exercise and eat a healthy diet, though they do not specify particular foods.

But some experts already counsel their fatty liver patients to avoid added sugars, which manufacturers commonly add to heavily processed foods.

Added sugars are typically high in fructose, which can ramp up the production of new fat when it is metabolised by the liver.

For the study, Dr Miriam Vos, one of the authors, and her colleagues recruited 40 children, about 13 years old on average, who had fatty liver disease. Most were Hispanic, a group that has a particularly high prevalence of fatty liver disease.

The researchers then randomly assigned the children to one of two diet groups for eight weeks.

One group limited added sugars, and the second group of children, which served as the control, remained on their usual diets.

They tailored the diet to the needs of each household by examining the foods they consumed in a typical week and then swapping in lower sugar alternatives.

Fruit juices, soft drinks and other sweet drinks were forbidden. They were replaced with unsweetened

iced teas, milk, water and other non-sugary beverages.

Ultimately, the low-sugar diet was not restrictive. The children could eat fruit, starches and pasta, for example, and were allowed to eat as much as they wanted.

But the goal was to get their added sugar intake to less than 3 per cent of their daily calories, less than the 5 per cent to 10 per cent limit for adults and children recommended

by the World Health Organisation.

After eight weeks, the low-sugar group saw their added sugar intake drop to just 1 per cent of their daily calories, compared with 9 per cent in the control group.

They also had a remarkable change in their liver health. They had a 31 per cent reduction in liver fat, on average, compared with no change in the control group.

They also had a 40 per cent drop

in their levels of alanine aminotransferase, a liver enzyme that increases when liver cells are damaged or inflamed.

"This is a step, it's not the final word," another author, Dr Jeffrey Schwimmer said. "Based on this, we would envision studies that look at whether this therapy can treat the disease well enough to prevent cirrhosis, end-stage liver disease and liver cancer." NYTIMES

About 80 million to 100 million Americans have non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, which causes the liver to swell with dangerous levels of fat. Roughly seven million of those are adolescents and teenagers.

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SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE (IN ENGLISH)

17th February 2019
Welcoming the Year of the Pig by Bro. KWEH SOON HAN

24th February 2019
The Satay Stick in my Practice by Dr. ANG BENG CHOO

3rd March 2019
The Meaning of Suffering by Ven. Bhante RAJA

10th March 2019
10 Reasons to be Really Happy by Dr. YOUNG CHEE HONG

24th March 2019
a. How to Stay Positive in Times of Mental and Emotional Turmoil by Bro. DESLEY TAN
b. Wearing the Robes: A Layman's Experience of a Short Term Ordination by Bro. SEOW KIAT HENG

31st March 2019
Dealing with Grief by Ven. JIAN XIN

7th April 2019
You Will Never Walk Alone by Ven. PHRA GOH

14th April 2019
On Human Dignity by Bro. LAU KIM KOON

28th April 2019
Cherishing My Three Dear Friends by Bro. KWEH SOON HAN

Venue: The Reflection Hall, 5th Floor, Main Building, Manjusri Secondary School, 20 Ubi Avenue 1, Singapore 408940

Time: 11:00am till 1:00pm (Every Sunday)

Carpark: Within the School's designated carparks, or HDB Public Carpark opposite the School (Blocks 342 to 352)

Public Buses: Bus No. 63, 63M and 137

MRT Stations: Ubi Station (Direct) or MacPherson & Eunos Stations and then take a public bus, e.g. SBS Bus No. 63 (Indirect)

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Note: If you are coming for the FIRST time, please email us to confirm the date of the talk that you wish to attend in case it is cancelled.

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STAGE PROGRAMME			
TIME	25 FEB 2019 (Monday)	26 FEB 2019 (Tuesday)	27 FEB 2019 (Wednesday)
11.00pm to 12.00pm		NR Nobel™: An Innovative Breakthrough in the Field of Life Extension and Longevity in Cosmetics by AVIV International Pte Ltd	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd
12.00pm to 1.00pm	Increase Profitability and Productivity with Microneedling, Plasma and Clinical Module Core for Professionals by Meijo Skincare Wellness	Increase Profitability and Productivity with Microneedling, Plasma and Clinical Module Core for Professionals by Meijo Skincare Wellness	Increase Profitability and Productivity with Microneedling, Plasma and Clinical Module Core for Professionals by Meijo Skincare Wellness
1.00pm to 2.00pm	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd	DR. HOU & LING Double Extracts Diamond White Essence by Jing Rui Biotechnology - Col En International Ltd
2.00pm to 3.00pm	The Most Advanced Reproduction Beauty in Japan by Beauty Planning Inc.	TOKI SKIN: The Japanese Way to Naturally Beautiful, Porcelain Skin by Lit Botanica Pte Ltd	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd
3.00pm to 4.00pm	Miraculous Non Surgical Face Lift by FABLife Pte Ltd	DR. HOU & LING LIPOFORM Bust Plus Lotion by Jing Rui Biotechnology - Col En International Ltd	Your Skills Your Future: Latest Government Subsidy Beauty Courses 2019 by SOQ Biz Hub Pte Ltd
4.00pm to 5.00pm	NR Nobel™: An Innovative Breakthrough in the Field of Life Extension and Longevity in Cosmetics by AVIV International Pte Ltd	The Myth of Japanese Cosmetics, 'NAHLS' by Deep Impact Co., Ltd.	NR Nobel™: An Innovative Breakthrough in the Field of Life Extension and Longevity in Cosmetics by AVIV International Pte Ltd
5.00pm to 6.00pm	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd	Miraculous Non Surgical Face Lift by FABLife Pte Ltd	Self-Defence Power - Our Body's Inherent Ability to Heal by Nature Produce
6.00pm to 7.00pm	Self-Defence Power - Our Body's Inherent Ability to Heal by Nature Produce	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd	

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME			
TIME	25 FEB 2019 (Monday)	26 FEB 2019 (Tuesday)	27 FEB 2019 (Wednesday)
11.30pm to 12.30pm	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd		
12.30pm to 1.30pm	7 Minutes Miracle Face Lift by FABLife Pte Ltd	7 Minutes Miracle Face Lift by FABLife Pte Ltd	
1.30pm to 2.30pm	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd
2.30pm to 3.30pm	The Best Body Contouring Tech of Both Worlds: NobleShape with LLD+AMF+RF by Aesthetics Marketing Asia Pte Ltd	Add a Whole New Dimension to your AGASSI - The Latest RF Smile Lifting & Vaginal Tightening Concept by Aesthetics Marketing Asia Pte Ltd	Bio-Jet - The Next Generation of Needle-Free Transdermal Drug Delivery Concept by Aesthetics Marketing Asia Pte Ltd
3.30pm to 4.30pm	2 Weeks to Brighter, Even and Younger Looking Skin with the Power of Po3™. The Light Serum by 28Cubed by NamZ Pte Ltd	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd
4.30pm to 5.30pm		5 Most Effective Meridian Point for Natural Face Lifting by SOQ Biz Hub Pte Ltd	5 Most Effective Meridian Point for Natural Face Lifting by SOQ Biz Hub Pte Ltd

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Australia's Marnus Labuschagne battling the heat at the Gabba Cricket Ground in Brisbane, where a match was held between Australia and Sri Lanka last Friday. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Mist fans and tunnels help to keep people cool at the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne. Temperatures soared to a record 42.2 deg C last Friday. PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Some children having a splash at a fountain to beat the heat on Thursday, day 11 of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Fans at the Australian Open grabbed at just about anything - wet towels, hats, fans, and even a mini-umbrella - to try to shield themselves from the heat. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Australia fries as the heat soars higher

More suffering from heatstroke; country hit by blackouts as electricity grids are pushed to the limits

David Fogarty
Assistant Foreign Editor

The records keep breaking. Australia is wilting from back-to-back summer heatwaves that are pushing people, animals and electricity grids to the limit.

Last Thursday, temperatures soared to 46.6 deg C in Adelaide, breaking a record for the city set decades ago. In Port Augusta, a town just to the north of Adelaide, the mercury hit 49.5 deg C the same day.

The previous week, the New South Wales town of Noona broke the record for the country's highest night-time temperature, hitting 35.9 deg C on Jan 16. Other records have been broken in recent weeks.

Australians are used to hot summers. But each summer seems to be getting hotter and more extreme. Hospitals and emergency services have had to cope with an influx of people suffering from heat exhaustion or heatstroke, especially seniors.

The beaches are packed with people trying to beat the heat and, during the Australian Open in Melbourne last week, tennis fans chilled out in giant mist tunnels.

Businesses have also been trying to help customers to keep their cool. When temperatures hit 45 deg C last week, one Adelaide pub served free beer.

Elsewhere across the country, many people sought shelter at home in the air con or used fans, cold towels and drank cold water.

South Australia's health authorities last Thursday reported that dozens had received emergency treatment for heat-related illnesses. "Remember to check on elderly friends, relatives and neighbours, and those who are unwell," tweeted the state emergency services.

The heat has scorched Melbourne and Canberra, the capital, as well. Temperatures hit 42.8 deg C last Friday in Melbourne and 41 deg C in Canberra last Saturday, the fifth day this month that temperatures have hit 40 deg C or above in the Australian capital.

The extreme heat has taxed the electricity grid, triggering widespread blackouts in southern Australia last Friday because of surging demand. The authorities said more than 200,000 customers



LEFT: Teens leap at the chance to cool off at a jetty on Glenelg beach in Adelaide. The beaches in Australia are packed with people trying to beat the heat. PHOTO: EPA-EFE
ABOVE: A bush fire burning in Tasmania, Australia. Dozens of bush fires are burning in Tasmania state as well as in Victoria and New South Wales. PHOTO: REUTERS

were without power after forced outages to reduce the risk of the entire grid failing.

But while the heat might seem extreme now, it is likely to be a lot worse in future, say climate scientists.

That is worrying the health services as heatwaves are a major killer. In Australia, since 1900, they have killed more people than the sum of all other natural hazards, a study published in 2014 found.

The world has already warmed 1 deg C on average since the mid-19th century.

It is on track to warm at least 3 deg C by the end of the century based on current emission reduction pledges by nearly 200 nations that signed the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement.

Climate scientists say higher temperatures mean longer and more extreme heatwaves and droughts and deadlier and longer fire seasons. In Australia, that is a recipe for disaster for people and wildlife.

The heat and ongoing drought in much of south-east Australia have primed conditions this summer for fires. Dozens of bush fires are burning in Tasmania state as well as in Victoria and New South Wales.

Looking ahead, temperatures are likely to remain above average during February to April for much of the country, said the Australian Bureau of Meteorology in its latest long-range forecast.

As of this week, the heat has abated with the forecast of a low-intensity heatwave for south-east Australia until Friday. But summer is far from over.

THIRSTY KOALAS

The heat has taken a toll on wildlife and farm animals too. Dozens of wild horses were found dead in a dried-up water hole near Alice Springs in the Northern Territory last week. Dozens more had to be culled.

Yet heart-warming stories of people helping thirsty koalas and kangaroos have filled social media in recent weeks. A video on Australian Broadcasting Corporation online last Saturday showed a koala drinking water from a bottle held by a man. Another showed a koala on a golf course drinking from a bucket.

In Bourke, in western New South Wales, a police officer rescued an injured and heat-stressed sheep, strapped it into the front passenger seat and took it to a shelter, with netizens calling the officer a hero.

In far north Queensland and elsewhere, thousands of bats have died from heat, some literally dropping out of the sky. Thousands died around Cairns in late November, when a heatwave along the coast smashed temperature records over several days, peaking at 45.2 deg C near Townsville.

Climate scientists have been warning for years about the risks from heatwaves and other weather extremes.

"Extreme temperatures are projected to far exceed current temperature records by a large margin in just a few decades. We cannot continue to prepare and approach heatwaves as though they are just a minor inconvenience," said Australian climate scientist Sophie Lewis on Twitter last Friday.

Politically, the heatwave is proving to be a challenge for the government of Prime Minister Scott Morrison, which supports an expansion of coal mining and the building of new coal-fired power stations, which are major greenhouse gas polluters.



Eggs on a pavement in Adelaide. When the temperature is a searing 46.6 deg C and climbing, it's so hot you can fry your eggs on the road. PHOTO: REUTERS

ing to be a challenge for the government of Prime Minister Scott Morrison, which supports an expansion of coal mining and the building of new coal-fired power stations, which are major greenhouse gas polluters.

This is despite clear warnings from the United Nations' science panel on climate change, which issued a landmark report last October saying the world needs to drastically cut greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 to have any chance of preventing a climate catastrophe.

With climate change being felt intensely by many Australians, there is a growing call for stronger climate action by the government. The issue is set to be a central focus

dfogarty@sph.com.sg



Amid the soaring temperatures, a roadside sign in Melbourne signals danger and carries a total fire ban. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

Megacities face growing health risks as mercury shoots up

As the world gets hotter, heatwaves become longer lasting and more intense globally, scientists say.

Hundreds of millions of people, especially in densely packed megacities, will be vulnerable to more severe illness and death, the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) said last year in its special report on warming of 1.5 deg C against that of 2 deg C.

Australia is particularly at risk, studies show. Heatwaves will occur

more often with greater spikes in temperature. In a country with an ageing population, that presents a huge health challenge.

Heatwaves could cause an additional 6,214 deaths by 2050 in Victoria state alone, the Climate Council of Australia, a non-profit organisation, said in a 2014 special report on heatwaves.

More extreme heat would also lead to loss of labour productivity and greater stress on crops and live-

stock, enhance conditions for bushfires, and raise the risks from vector-borne diseases.

A study published last year in the Weather And Climate Extremes journal found that the number of heatwaves in Australia and the duration of the most intense heatwaves will increase significantly in the near future (2020 to 2039) and more so in the far future (2060 to 2079), with greater increases in the tropical north than south.

All capital cities are projected to experience at least a tripling of heatwave days each year by the far future, the researchers said.

Northern Australia could face heatwaves lasting more than a month. In the south, Adelaide, Canberra, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney face more hot days and more extremely hot days.

Globally, heatwaves will become an increasing threat to people, agriculture and infrastructure.

The IPCC report said the largest increases in the number of hot days are projected to occur in the tropics, including South-east Asia. People in large cities are particularly vulnerable, the report says, because urban centres are already warmer than surrounding areas. Cities trap heat from the sun, air-conditioners, transport and industrial activity.

It says future warming and urban expansion could lead to more extreme heat. At 1.5 deg C of warming,

twice as many megacities globally could become heat stressed, exposing more than 350 million additional people to deadly heat by 2050 as cities keep growing.

The IPCC and others point to the need for better urban planning, such as planting more trees, more reflective roofs, more efficient building design that relies less on air-conditioning, and cleaner transport.

David Fogarty



LEFT: A koala drinks from a bottle offered by a man in Adelaide. Heart-warming stories of people helping thirsty koalas and kangaroos have filled social media in recent weeks. PHOTO: REUTERS
ABOVE: A police officer from the town of Bourke in western New South Wales rescued an injured and heat-stressed sheep. He put the sheep in the front passenger seat and drove it to a holding pen. PHOTO: FACEBOOK/NEW SOUTH WALES POLICE FORCE

Politically, the heatwave is proving to be a challenge for the government of Prime Minister Scott Morrison, which supports an expansion of coal mining and the building of new coal-fired power stations, which are major greenhouse gas polluters.

RIISING HEAT

Extreme temperatures are projected to far exceed current temperature records by a large margin in just a few decades. We cannot continue to prepare and approach heatwaves as though they are just a minor inconvenience.



AUSTRALIAN CLIMATE SCIENTIST
SOPHIE LEWIS



May seeks to ask EU to reopen withdrawal agreement

Move comes at critical time, as Parliament set to vote last night

LONDON • Facing a series of critical votes in Parliament, Prime Minister Theresa May raised the stakes by promising to reopen Britain's withdrawal agreement with the European Union, putting her on a direct collision course with the bloc.

Mrs May's move comes at a critical time, as Parliament was set to vote last night on a series of amendments to her Brexit plan, which earlier this month suffered one of the greatest defeats in modern British history.

Before the night is out, Parliament could reverse decades of protocol and practice and assert control over policymaking that has been dominated by the governing party and its prime minister.

The EU meanwhile signalled immediately after Mrs May's address to British lawmakers yesterday that they would not renegotiate the withdrawal agreement and hence give Mrs May what she most needs, which is a new way for Britain to guarantee that Brexit will not mean a return of a hard border – with checkpoints, passport controls and customs inspectors – between Ireland and Northern Ireland.

British opposition leader Jeremy

Corbyn said he believed Mrs May's government would have to delay Brexit, due March 29, as time runs out to get a deal with Brussels.

Mrs May had called on Britain's lawmakers to send a message to the EU that they would support her plans to renegotiate "significant" changes to the Brexit divorce deal. She said a divided Parliament would make it harder to leave the EU.

"The odds of success become far longer if this House ties one hand behind my back. So I call on the House to give me the mandate I need to deliver a deal this House can support. Do that and I can work to reopen the withdrawal agreement," she told Parliament yesterday.

Members of Parliament, frustrated by the inability of the Prime Minister to win approval for her withdrawal agreement, were to spend yesterday debating and voting on cross-party amendments designed to steer the government one way or another on Brexit.

Mrs May also faces a sceptical European leadership, grown weary with her delays and the inability of her own Conservative Party, even her own Cabinet, to rally round a single vision for Brexit.

"We will not reopen the withdrawal agreement. So it may be about semantics of what 'reopening' means. If things go towards more declarations, assurances or statements – we can do that. But if she really wants to reopen the whole thing, then it's a 'no'," said a EU diplomat who is involved in the Brexit talks, on condition of anonymity after Mrs May's address.

"Alternative arrangements' are not only mentioned in the withdrawal agreement but also in the declaration on the future, which we said we can work on."

The British Parliament was to try to shape the future of the country's exit from the EU by debating and voting on what changes they want Mrs May to seek to her Brexit deal.

Perhaps the most critical proposal, the Cooper-Boles amendment, would effectively rule out a "no-deal" Brexit if Mrs May cannot persuade lawmakers to approve her plan by the end of next month.

It proposes a nine-month extension, to Dec 31, but leaves the length of delay open to debate.

Mr Corbyn, Labour Party's leader, said his party would back a three-month delay to Brexit if the government cannot get an exit deal approved by Parliament before Feb 26.

"The Labour Party will back that amendment tonight because to crash out without a deal would be deeply damaging for industry and the economy," said Mr Corbyn.

"Whatever happens in the votes that follow it has now become inevitable that the government will have to extend Article 50 in any scenario."

Analysts believe that the vote will be close: Some lawmakers from the opposition Labour Party are likely to reject the measure, because they fear it might anger Brexit-supporting voters whose support they need, particularly in the English North and Midlands.

NYTIMES, WASHINGTON POST, REUTERS

Footage from the UK Parliament's Parliamentary Recording Unit showing British Prime Minister Theresa May speaking at the start of a debate in the House of Commons in London yesterday. She had called on Britain's lawmakers to send a message to the EU that they would support her plans to renegotiate "significant" changes to the Brexit divorce deal.

PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Palestine govt resigns in power gambit

RAMALLAH (Palestinian Territories) • The Palestinian government submitted its resignation yesterday, a statement said, in a move seen as a bid by President Mahmoud Abbas to strengthen his position as a decade-old political split deepens.

Analysts view replacing Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah after five years as part of Mr Abbas' efforts to further isolate his political rival Hamas, who runs the Gaza Strip.

Mr Hamdallah's government will remain in place while a new administration is formed. "The government of Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah submitted on Tuesday its resignation to President Mahmoud Abbas," official news agency Wafa said following a Cabinet meeting.

The government "will continue to serve our people wherever they are and shoulder all its responsibilities until a new government is formed", it added.

It was unclear how the change of government could impact policy. The secularist Mr Abbas remains the primary decision-maker and interlocutor with the international community.

Palestinian politics has essentially been paralysed since 2007, when Islamist group Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip from Mr Abbas' forces in a near civil war, a year after winning parliamentary elections. Since then, Mr Abbas' governments have maintained limited self-rule in the occupied West Bank, while Hamas has led a rival government in the strip.

The division between the Palestinian parties is seen as a key issue preventing progress in solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The new government is expected to be made up of parties that are members of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, which does not include Hamas or its ally Islamic Jihad.

Hamas condemned the government's resignation, saying Mr Abbas was seeking to establish a "separatist government" to serve his interests. "Our people need a national unity government," spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said in a statement.

Fatah officials said they had begun consultations regarding forming a new government, though no time frame was announced.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Probe into Russian meddling in US election nearly over: Acting A-G

WASHINGTON • Special counsel Robert Mueller is wrapping up his investigation of Russian interference in the 2016 presidential campaign and whether the Trump campaign cooperated with Moscow's operation, the acting US attorney-general announced.

"The investigation is, I think, close to being completed, and I hope that we can get the report from director Mueller as soon as possible," Mr Matthew Whitaker

said on Monday.

His impromptu remark, at the end of a news conference about an unrelated case, was a highly unusual confirmation of the state of the special counsel's investigation.

Justice Department policy ordinarily prohibits public comment on open criminal inquiries, and Mr Mueller has refused to publicly discuss the investigation since he was appointed in May 2017 to oversee it.

Mr Whitaker, who is considered intensely loyal to President Donald Trump, said that he had been "fully briefed on the investigation" and that he looked forward to Mr Mueller delivering a report.

Mr Whitaker's comments appeared to take even Justice Department officials by surprise.

As soon as he described the special counsel's work as nearly over, a spokesman shut down the news conference, declaring hastily:

"That's all the time for today. Thank you so much."

It was unclear whether Mr Whitaker had discussed his comments with Mr Mueller beforehand, or if he was speaking off the cuff.

A spokesman for Mr Mueller, Peter Carr, declined to comment.

Prosecutors typically shy away from discussing the progress of investigations to avoid unfairly framing public expectations, partly

because new evidence could unexpectedly arise.

Mr Whitaker acknowledged that tradition before giving his assessment of Mr Mueller's progress. "I am really not going to talk about an open and ongoing investigation," he said.

His comments came on the heels of the indictment of Roger Stone, a Trump ally, on Friday on charges of witness tampering, obstruction of justice and lying to Congress about

Trump to deliver State of the Union next Tuesday

WASHINGTON • President Donald Trump will deliver his State of the Union address to Congress on Feb 5, 10 days before the deadline for lawmakers in the House and the Senate to reach an agreement on a border security package to avert another government shutdown.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi sent an invitation to the President on Monday, after the two spoke for about 12 minutes by telephone in a conversation that she initiated, an aide said. Mr Trump later replied, agreeing to the date.

"We have a great story to tell and yet, great goals to achieve!" he wrote.

The invitation capped weeks of back and forth between the Speaker and the President over when, and whether, he could deliver the

speech in the House chamber.

On Jan 23, in the middle of the 35-day government shutdown, Mrs Pelosi told the President she wanted to postpone the address, initially scheduled for yesterday, until after the government reopened, and even went as far as to suggest that he deliver the speech in writing.

Mr Trump retaliated by grounding the military plane that was supposed to take Mrs Pelosi and other lawmakers on a fact-finding trip to Afghanistan. Then, when Mr Trump pressed ahead last week, insisting he wanted to give the speech on Jan 29, Mrs Pelosi disinvited him.

"When I wrote to you on January 23rd, I stated that we should work together to find a mutually agreeable date when government has re-

opened to schedule this year's State of the Union address," Mrs Pelosi wrote on Monday in the letter.

"In our conversation today, we agreed on February 5th."

As part of their deal to end the shutdown, Mr Trump and congressional Democrats agreed that a conference committee of House and Senate appropriators would have until Feb 15 to come up with a border security package.

If they fail to reach an agreement, or come up with a plan that is not to Mr Trump's liking, the President has threatened to either shut down the government again or invoke emergency powers to circumvent Congress in obtaining money for a wall along the south-western border.

NYTIMES

WorldBriefs

Faster progress in fake news fight needed: EU

BRUSSELS • The European Union (EU) urged US Internet giants and advertising firms to intensify the fight against disinformation campaigns before EU elections in May, or risk regulation.

The European Commission said Google, Facebook, Twitter, Mozilla and advertising groups have made "some progress" towards meeting their pledges to fight fake news by removing bogus accounts and curbing suspect sites.

However, "the pace of progress needs to be faster", EU's security commissioner Julian King said yesterday.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Labourers sacked over strikes in Bangladesh

DHAKA • Nearly 5,000 low-paid Bangladeshi garment workers stitching clothes for global brands have been sacked by factory bosses for joining strikes over wages this month that turned violent, police said yesterday.

The days-long protests disrupted the US\$30 billion (S\$41 billion) industry and saw police fire rubber bullets and tear gas at demonstrators.

One worker was killed and more than 50 injured in clashes in Ashulia, a key industrial town outside Dhaka where clothes are sewn for retail giants H&M, Walmart and many others.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Australia PM calls for footballer's release

ABU DHABI • Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison called on the Thai government to release footballer Hakeem Al Araibi as prosecutors in Bangkok yesterday acknowledged receipt of an extradition request from Bahrain.

Mr Araibi, who fled to Australia from his homeland in 2014 and was later granted asylum, was arrested in November in Bangkok on an Interpol notice issued at Bahrain's request.

Mr Morrison had written a letter to his Thai counterpart Prayut Chan-o-cha asking that Mr Araibi be allowed to return home, the Australian Prime Minister's office said.

REUTERS

THE STRAITS TIMES

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The Straits Times says

Putting safety first in military training

The Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) will, for the first time, lower its training tempo across all services, with the aim of giving commanders and troops the time and space needed to review the safety of its systems and processes. The move is a part of measures which the military is taking after Singaporean actor Aloysius Pang died from injuries suffered during a military exercise in New Zealand. The fatality drew public attention again to what has been a number of recent accidents, Mr Pang's death being the fifth reported since September 2017. Although that spate of bad news followed four preceding years of no training- and operations-related fatalities, Singaporeans, particularly those whose sons perform national service,

would be right to be concerned about the safety of the training environment in which soldiers carry out their duties.

The lowering of the SAF's training tempo is an important step in addressing those concerns. The move will give it time to review and reinforce training safety protocols and, crucially, contribute to an environment in which personnel sharpen their safety awareness. At the end of the day, the effectiveness of all safety manuals and honed protocols depends on the real-time reactions of those who observe rules, often in trying circumstances that can appear out of the blue. No protocol conceivably could predict such circumstances, but the training regime must equip every

soldier to think about his safety and that of his colleagues even as the exigencies of training press down on all. An important consideration here is how well-prepared operationally ready national servicemen (NSmen) are for their military jobs.

Civilians with day jobs, they differ from both full-time national servicemen and regulars in the armed forces. Not unnaturally, their civilian pursuits put them out of daily touch with the rigours of military life till they arrive for their in-camp training (ICT). Anecdotal evidence suggests that some NSmen view that training as a break from work and so come to while their time away. This attitude not only represents a gross misunderstanding of the role of ICT in the national defence

structure of Singapore, but also increases the chances of accidents occurring because of insufficient attention paid to the job at hand.

There is, of course, no indication or suggestion that Mr Pang was of this attitude. On the contrary, he was qualified and competent to carry out his work as an armament technician. However, NSmen must remember that safety depends on their alertness as much as it does on protocols. The independent Committee of Inquiry that will investigate the tragic death of a promising young Singaporean will reveal what occurred, how and why. The committee must ensure that everything possible is done to make national service safer for its soldiers, just as they keep Singapore safe for all.

EconomicAffairs

The illusion of S'pore on the Thames

Brexitters cannot cherry-pick from the Singapore model to keep the British economy thriving.



Vikram Khanna

Associate Editor

Two hundred years after Stamford Raffles arrived in Singapore and transformed it into a free port, we hear about "Singapore on the Thames". Google the phrase, and you get more than 13 million results.

It started as a rhetorical battle cry by Brexiter ultras who believe that leaving the European Union will somehow deliver the United Kingdom into some kind of unregulated, free-trading, low-tax economic paradise, for which Singapore is inaccurately designated as the role model.

In fact, some Brexitters, like former UK Independence Party MP Douglas Carswell, have taken the idea even further, declaring that after Brexit, Britain would be "Singapore on steroids".

The parallel between post-Brexit Britain and present-day Singapore is a fantasy that has already been debunked.

Leaving aside the problem of scale – Singapore is a city state of 5.4 million, while Britain is a country of 65 million with about 70 very heterogeneous cities and rural hinterlands – Singapore has followed a very different approach to everything from public housing to industrial policy to government spending, immigration and social welfare

that cannot be replicated in Britain.

TARIFFS AND FREE TRADE DEALS

But there are some Brexitters who understand that while Singapore is no paragon of free-market capitalism, it does have one of the lowest tariffs in the world and a low-tax regime, which Britain can cherry-pick while ignoring everything else.

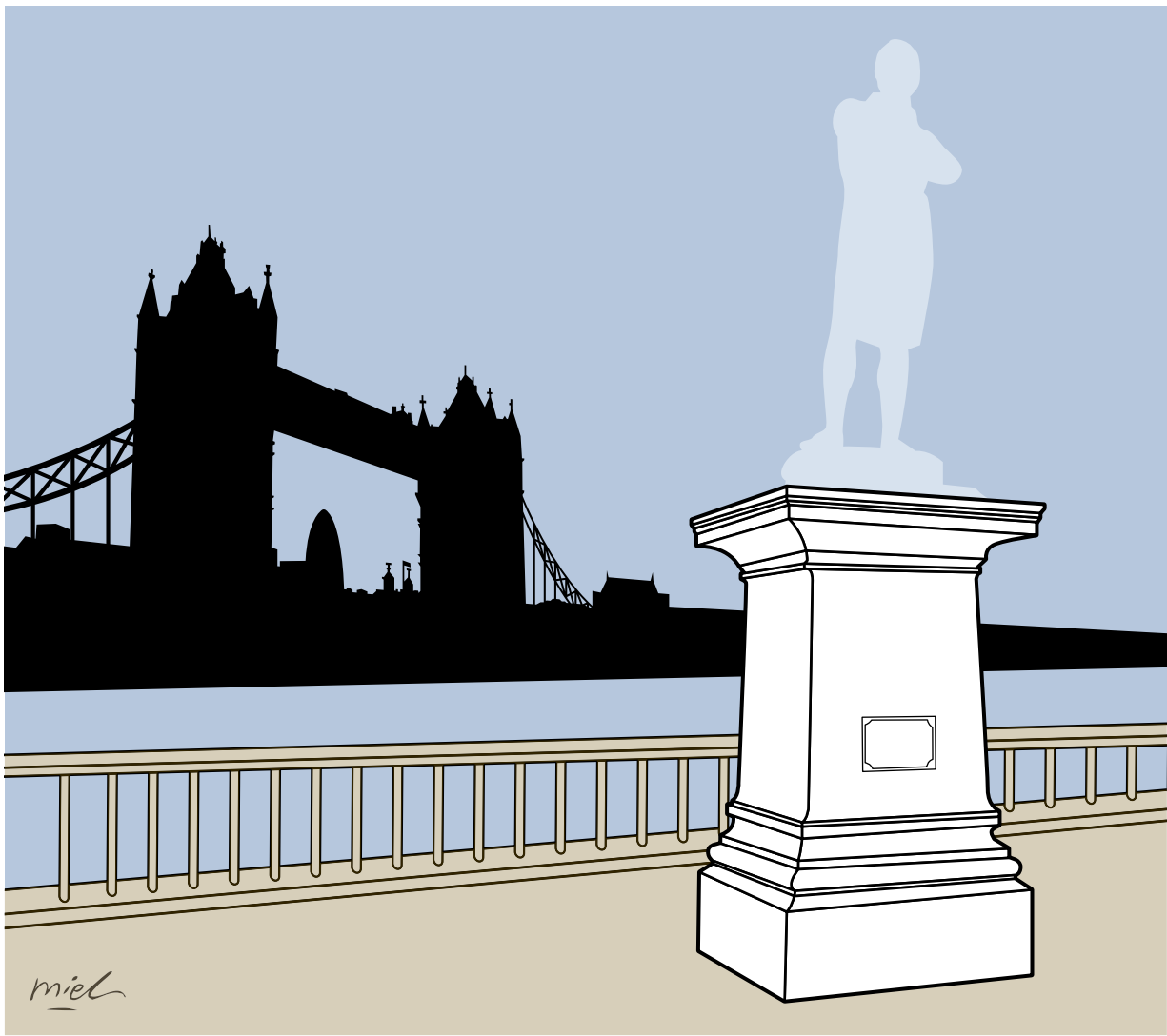
In the vision of these Brexitters, Britain would unilaterally eliminate tariffs for all its trading partners, including the EU, even if the EU does not reciprocate. As has happened in the case of Singapore, a tariff-free economy would strengthen Britain's ability to forge mutually acceptable free trade deals with any country of its choosing.

A drop in the value of the pound – which would almost certainly happen in the event of the no-deal Brexit that the Brexitters favour – would work to Britain's advantage. It would help exporters by neutralising the impact of the World Trade Organisation tariffs that they would face when exporting to the EU.

Some, such as the crusading pro-Brexit economist Patrick Minford, claim that a weaker pound would also boost company profits, investment, job creation, productivity and wages.

But by leaving the EU, Britain would lose the free trade agreements (FTAs) the EU already has with more than 30 countries and territories (which would be a very un-Singaporean thing to do).

It can request that these countries roll over their deals with the EU to Britain (which Singapore, at least, is prepared to do, for a temporary period) but this is not a given. It will also be more difficult



for Britain to negotiate FTAs with the rest of the world than it has been for Singapore.

SIZE AND SUPPLY CHAINS

Britain is a larger economy, with different and more diverse interest groups, including farmers, small businesses, multinational corporations, a large community of workers in culture and the arts, an outsized financial services sector and millions of young people with

dreams of living and working in the EU, which would no longer be automatic after Brexit.

Would Britain's manufacturers be able to cope with competition from their United States, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Taiwanese counterparts in a zero-tariff regime?

Would its dairy farmers accept handing a price advantage to milk and cheese producers from the EU, the US, Australia and New Zealand?

Would public opinion support

allowing IT workers from India and the Philippines to flood the British labour market? Maybe some of this is possible, but it is more likely improbable.

Moreover, unlike Singapore in 1965, Britain is not an impoverished country that must find its way in the world and can launch an audacious new strategy from scratch. It is the world's fifth-largest economy and 44 per cent of its exports go to the EU.

Its producers are already deeply entrenched in EU-centred supply chains. Some of them have been serving the same customers, or sourcing from the same suppliers, since Britain joined the then European Economic Community in 1973. At a minimum, they will face severe transitional costs as they are forced to plug into different supply chains centred around the Americas and Asia.

The transitional costs will also include major job losses as companies relocate to the EU, which many are already doing. The City of London – the financial district – reported that it alone could lose some 5,000 jobs. Deutsche Bank, Goldman Sachs and Citi have already moved parts of their business out of Britain and into the EU. More banks, as well as insurance firms, will follow.

Outside the financial sector, companies are relocating their headquarters out of Britain, including Sony, Panasonic, Unilever and Dyson (which is moving its corporate head office to Singapore), among others. All of this would have knock-on effects, including on Britain's property market, which is already beginning to look shaky, as well as local service providers.

VISION WITHOUT A LEADER

The Brexitters acknowledge these transitional costs, but claim that theirs is a long-term vision. But that also raises the question of who will implement it.

Whereas Singapore had Mr Lee Kuan Yew and Dr Goh Keng Swee to turn the vision into reality, the constituency for unilateral free trade in Britain is confined to a small band of Brexitters.

The Tories are divided between Brexit and Remain and one cannot imagine an equally divided Labour Party government under the left-leaning Mr Jeremy Corbyn even contemplating the notion of unilateral free trade.

One of the Brexitters championing this idea, economist Roger Bootle, asks, after making his case: "But who is going to be our Lee Kuan Yew?"

He might also well ask: "Where is our Stamford Raffles?"

There are no candidates, and that is another problem.

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America revisits capitalism's threat to democracy

Jamelle Bouie

An old but still potent critique has re-emerged in American politics, one that holds concentrated wealth, and perhaps American capitalism itself, as inimical to democratic society.

The basic idea holds capitalism as at best an uneasy partner with democratic values. At worst, it erodes them completely, undermining the social and material basis of republican citizenship as envisioned by the American revolutionaries.

Since the start of the new year, this thinking has become especially prominent. Representative

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York came out in favour of high marginal tax rates on the rich, arguing last week that "a system that allows billionaires to exist" while others live in extreme poverty is "wrong".

This thinking is also present in a new proposal from Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts to tax the nation's largest fortunes. The plan, which would impose an annual 2 per cent wealth tax on fortunes greater than US\$50 million (\$\$68 million) and a 3 per cent tax on ones greater than US\$1 billion, is geared as much towards protecting democracy as it is towards raising revenue. It is an attempt to arrest the many types of economic inequality that threaten political

equality – the ability of everyone to have something like an equal say in the democratic process.

Most Americans tend not to think of these egalitarian (even anti-capitalist) sentiments as part of the nation's intellectual heritage. But Ms Warren, Ms Ocasio-Cortez and similarly situated politicians like Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders are drawing on influential currents in political history.

Some of those stretch back to the founding era. Despite his own status as a wealthy slaveholder, Thomas Jefferson was wary of extreme disparities of wealth and thought it was incompatible with republican political ideals.

Commenting on "the enormous inequality producing so much misery to the bulk of mankind" in Europe, he described his position in a famous letter to James Madison in 1785. "Whenever there is in any country, uncultivated lands and unemployed poor, it is clear that the laws of property have been so far

extended as to violate natural right. The earth is given as a common stock for man to labour and live on. If, for the encouragement of industry we allow it to be appropriated, we must take care that other employment be furnished to those excluded from the appropriation."

More than a century later, labour and agrarian radicals would make a version of this observation vis-a-vis the unjust and unfair arrangements that trapped farmers and industrial workers. For them, the extreme inequality and labour exploitation of the era was simply incompatible with meaningful democratic citizenship, as it left both hopelessly dependent on the owners of capital.

"Suddenly, without warning, the shop closes down" or the worker "is discharged and his wage, small at best, is cut off. He has to live, the rent must be paid, the wife and children must have clothing and food, fuel must be provided, and yet he has no job, no wages, and no prospect for getting any," wrote socialist leader Eugene Debs in a fiery 1904

pamphlet that painted a dire picture of capitalist dependency.

He continued: "Is a worker in that position free? Is he a citizen? A man? No! He is simply a wage slave, a job holder, while it lasts, here today and gone tomorrow." As Debs saw it, if we are deprived as workers, then we cannot truly act as citizens. The National Farmers Alliance and Industrial Union had its heyday some years before Debs entered public life, but its theorists similarly connected ordinary people's dislocation from the political process to the growing dominance of corporations and concentrated capital.

Neither labour radicals nor agrarian rebels ever attained enough power to enact their ideas in full, although they had a huge influence on attempting to reconcile the reality of an industrial society with the nation's democratic values. But by the end of the 20th century their insights had been smothered by corporate power and its political allies.

The re-emergence of this democratic critique of inequality through the political success of figures like Ms Warren, Mr Sanders and Ms Ocasio-Cortez seems to point to the beginning of a course correction, or at least the beginning of dialogue about a course correction.

The extent to which America's economic elites are rattled by the mere fact that this discussion is happening is a clear sign that it needs to happen.

As Americans across the political spectrum gear up to try to deny President Donald Trump a second term in office, all of this may seem a distraction from the emergency at hand. Just the opposite is true. Mr Trump's presidency is a symptom of profound democratic weakness. Should he lose in 2020, that will be the beginning of a recovery. There is the need still to rethink and rebuild democracy in the United States and that has to include a re-imagining of the economy on which it rests. NYTIMES

1819 – the start of a modern, multicultural Singapore

While Singapore was a thriving port long before Raffles arrived, 1819 was a crucial turning point that set the island on the path to the nation it is today, says Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. Here is his speech at the launch of The Singapore Bicentennial on Monday

Friends and fellow Singaporeans. I am very happy to launch the Singapore Bicentennial.

Today, we mark a significant anniversary in Singapore's history. Stamford Raffles did not "discover" Singapore, any more than Christopher Columbus "discovered" America. By the time Raffles arrived in 1819, Singapore had already had hundreds of years of history.

In the 14th century, this area, at the mouth of the Singapore River, was a thriving seaport called Temasek. Around this period, according to the Sejarah Melayu, Sang Nila Utama founded a kingdom here and named it Singapura.

When the Europeans came to South-east Asia in the 16th and 17th centuries, they knew about the island Singapore. Jacques de Coutre was a Flemish gem trader who knew the region well. Around 1630, two centuries before Stamford Raffles, de Coutre proposed to the King of Spain to build a fortress in Singapore because of its strategic location.

Had the King accepted de Coutre's proposal, Singapore might have become a Spanish colony, instead of a British one. But he did not.

And it took another 200 years before Raffles landed at a spot near here, and persuaded the Sultan of Johor to allow the British East India

Company to establish a trading post in Singapore. That was a crucial turning point in our history. It set this island on a trajectory leading to where we are today.

Raffles made Singapore a free port. The new colony prospered, and the population grew rapidly.

ARRIVALS FROM AFAR

Immigrants came from South-east Asia, China, India and beyond. Among the first were Munshi Abdullah, Tan Tock Seng and Naraina Pillai, who all came to Singapore in 1819.

Our streets carry evocative names that tell of our ancestors' diverse origins – Malacca Street, Amoy Street, Kadayanallur Street, Bugis Street, Bussorah Street, plus many others, and thus we became a multicultural and open society.

Trade was our life blood. It linked us to the archipelago around us, and to the world beyond. Rubber, tin and spices moved from South-east Asia through our entrepot to world markets, while manufactured goods flowed in the other direction.

We developed close economic and family ties with our neighbours in the region, and especially the Malay peninsula. We identified ourselves as South-east Asian and especially Malayan.

This history, seeded in 1819, drove us to join Malaysia in 1963. But though we did not realise it then, this history had also made us quite different from our neighbours and friends.

Throughout the colonial period, Singapore was never governed as part of Malaya. The island was either a separate crown colony or a part of the Straits Settlements, which included Penang and Malacca, but not the other Malay states.

Over nearly 150 years, our inter-communal relations, and our

world views had diverged from the society on the other side of the Causeway.

So, in retrospect, it was not surprising that less than two years after merger with Malaysia, we had to part ways, in an emotionally wrenching separation.

At the same time, this history since 1819 explains why after separation, Singapore not only survived, but thrived.

Our forefathers had not come here with the intention of staying. They had come as sojourners, to earn a living and perhaps a fortune, to support families back home.

But over time, as they slogged for a living, to feed themselves and their families, many decided to sink roots here. During World War II, they endured the dangers and privations of the Japanese Occupation. After the war, they were swept up in the worldwide wave of nationalism, anti-colonialism, and the struggle for self-determination.

When the communists won the civil war in China, Singapore felt the impact. The population had to decide who they were, and where they should settle and seek citizenship. A few left, but many stayed.

THE EMPORIUM THAT BECAME A HOME

They organised themselves and fought to shake off the British colonial yoke. This emporium became their home, and eventually their country. Gradually, they nurtured a national consciousness and sense of identity. They started thinking of themselves as Singaporeans.

So when Singapore separated from Malaysia, the Pioneer Generation were no strangers to hardship and struggle. We had the grit and the resolve to show the world, and ourselves, that we were

determined to endure, and to be masters of our own fate. And so we did.

Thus 1819 marked the beginning of a modern, outward-looking and multicultural Singapore.

Without 1819, we may never have launched on the path to nationhood as we know it today. Without 1819, we would not have had 1965, and we would certainly not have celebrated the success of SG50. 1819 made these possible.

This is why the Singapore Bicentennial is worth commemorating. We are not just remembering Stamford Raffles or William Farquhar, though we should.

We are tracing and reflecting upon our longer history, one that stretches back way before 1965. We are acknowledging and appreciating the broader context which shaped and created today's Singapore. This was our journey, from Singapore to Singaporean.

This journey was not a straight and level path, forwards and upwards. Along the way there were many ups and downs, successes and failures, triumphs and tragedies. We fought for independence from our colonial masters. But we also recognise the decisive and indelible imprint that the British left on Singapore – the rule of law, our parliamentary system of government, even the language I am speaking today.

Our forefathers paid with blood, sweat and tears, but they also savoured hard-won successes and patient, slow achievements. They cleared the jungles, and planted nutmeg, gambier and rubber. Indentured coolies slaved at the quayside, here at Boat Quay. Resourceful traders built import and export businesses, creating wealth and prosperity.

Many came, attracted by the rainbow. Not all found that pot of

gold, or made it from rags to riches. But many built better lives for themselves, and all kindled the hope of a brighter future, a brighter tomorrow for their children.

In the process, they formed communities and organised themselves to help one another: ethnic groups to provide mutual support and community leadership, like the Chinese clans and the Eurasian Association; welfare bodies to take care of the poor and underprivileged, like the Sree Narayana Mission and the Catholic Welfare Association; cultural groups to keep alive the heritage of the ancient civilisations, like the Angkatam Sasterawan '50 and Nam Hwa Opera.

Our forefathers built schools for the young, hospitals for the sick, places of worship for the faithful. These institutions did good work, grew in prestige and standing, and became rallying points and sources of strength for the community.

THE SINGAPORE STORY CONTINUES

Over two centuries, all these different strands wove together into a rich tapestry, a shared sense of destiny, and eventually a Singapore identity and nation. Sportsmen and women flew the Singapore flag at international meets. Servicemen took up arms to defend their families and homes. And today, we sing Majulah Singapura with one voice, and recite the National Pledge with conviction and pride.

Hence, I am glad that for the bicentennial, over 200 groups and organisations are holding commemorative events. Their stories and journeys are the personal experiences and collective memories that give life and meaning to the Singapore Bicentennial story. I hope these activities will ignite Singaporeans' interest to discover more about ourselves and our past.

In this bicentennial year, as we reflect on how this nation came into being, let us also think of how we can move forward together. For we are never done building Singapore.

It is every generation's duty to keep on building, for our children, and for our future. So that in another 50 or 100 years, Singaporeans not yet born will have a richer and greater Singapore Story to tell, and one that we will have helped to write together. Thank you.



Without 1819, we may never have launched on the path to nationhood as we know it today. Without 1819, we would not have had 1965, and we would certainly not have celebrated the success of SG50. 1819 made these possible. This is why the Singapore Bicentennial is worth commemorating.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the launch of the Singapore Bicentennial at the Singapore River on Monday. LIANHE ZAOBAO FILE PHOTO

Shark attacks and why data analysts should not dismiss anecdotes

Barry Ritholtz

One of the key lessons of behavioural economics is the danger of not examining your own beliefs. Failing to consider the reasons that underlie our decision-making increases the risk of error.

Although we can operate in our daily life on autopilot, other situations are not so forgiving. When we put capital at risk, the danger of not understanding what influences our decisions can be monetary losses, career risk or worse.

In this context, let's consider the aphorism, "the plural of anecdote is not data". This is the idea that a single example should never be used to extrapolate a broader rule about, well, anything.

This applies to stocks, the

economy, politics, Brexit – just about any situation where a compelling narrative might influence your views in spite of a dearth of evidence.

The truth of this statement is so self-evident that there seems to be little reason to have to investigate whether the quote is accurate or not. We tend to use it almost reflexively, usually in an attempt to refute a conclusion that cites a data point. Anecdotal evidence is not mathematically or scientifically sound. When our sample set consists of a single example (N = 1), our conclusion will have a margin of error of plus or minus 100 per cent.

We have learnt the problem with extrapolating from single examples, thanks to the work of Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman. In 1973, they were studying various mental shortcuts that people rely on when making

decisions with incomplete information; how easily an example might come to mind – including anecdotes or random examples – that might not be representative of the real world.

Perhaps the best real-life example of what's known as availability bias is shark attacks. Many interactions between humans and sharks occur without harm, but when they are to someone's detriment, lots of media coverage tend to follow. But the reality of the danger is very different.

More people were killed by mosquitoes last year than have been killed by sharks in the past 100 years. Indeed, annual deaths from selfies exceed yearly shark fatalities.

But shark attacks are more memorable and dramatic, and therefore readily and easily recalled.

Which brings us back to anecdotes: As it turns out, the

original quote about anecdotes had a very different context, and a much more nuanced meaning. It is attributed to Professor Ray Wolfinger, who was a political scientist at the University of California, Berkeley.

Prof Wolfinger's original statement was quite literally the very opposite of what we all have been using. He had actually said "the plural of anecdote is data". This might affect the way we think about and use data.

Mr Fred Shapiro, former editor of The Yale Book Of Quotations, had an e-mail exchange with the professor about the statement's origins. Prof Wolfinger, who recalled responding to a student's dismissal of a factual statement as a mere anecdote, told Mr Shapiro: "It was meant to suggest that data does not have an immaculate birth, and that anecdotes lead to deeper

research and then data."

The professor's take was not a warning against extrapolation or anecdotal evidence. If anything, he was encouraging data scientists to delve deeper into their experiences to discover fertile new areas of research and exploration.

To the alert observer, a compelling anecdote should start the process of digging into the data to determine if something is merely an intriguing one-off or emblematic of a broader trend. A good story should be considered preliminary evidence, the start of a more serious inquiry.

In other words, the plural of anecdote, to be more precise, might be valid data leading to a potentially significant conclusion. For that reason, when an unusual anecdote captures one's attention, it shouldn't be casually dismissed, lest a deeper truth be missed.

Consider the ramifications of this for how analysts, economists and fund managers do their jobs.

Algorithms are increasingly replacing repetitive tasks, and for people who work in finance, this is potentially an existential risk to their careers.

The ability to identify something via an anecdotal observation, then use data to discover a new idea or concept, might be relatively immune from the machines coming to replace you. So take heart: It might be a while – if ever – before artificial intelligence and big data are sophisticated enough to do just that. BLOOMBERG

• Barry Ritholtz founded Ritholtz Wealth Management and was chief executive and director of equity research at FusionIQ, a quantitative research firm. He is the author of Bailout Nation.



This year's search for star countries and politicians in Davos reached into the second tier – with the countries of Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz (top) and Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed getting positive attention. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

No more heroes for the global elite

What does it say of the future when the previous stellar national leaders or industries of Davos have all lost their shine?

Gideon Rachman

Everybody needs heroes – even Davos plutocrats. But the “global elite” is currently out of enthusiasm and ideas. In the corridors of the World Economic Forum (WEF) last week, Harvard economist Kenneth Rogoff summed it up: “This is the flattest Davos I can remember. Normally, there is a star country or a star industry that everybody is talking about. But this year, there is nothing.” That enthusiasm deficit has implications well beyond the easily parodied world of the Davos conference. For the past 30 years, Davos has been the best place to monitor the ideas and crazes that were exciting the rich and powerful. It is the place where elite consensus was both formed and promoted. Last year, the two Davos stars were easily identified. The fashionable technology was blockchain and the fashionable politician was France’s President Emmanuel Macron. But, since then, Mr Macron’s poll ratings have fallen almost as fast as the price of bitcoin. The French President stayed at home this year to deal with domestic discontents. He and bitcoin can now join the growing club of discarded Davos darlings. These are the countries, politicians or industries that were once deemed to represent the future but whose reputations have since taken a dive. The star countries of previous forums have often been

fast-growing emerging economies that were preferably also democracies, or at least “moving in the right direction”. Brazil used to tick all these boxes. In 2010, the WEF awarded its “Global Statesmanship Award” to then Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who had spoken at several previous forums. He was almost designed to delight Davos. He was a former radical who had embraced capitalism and globalisation while retaining his credentials as a social reformer. His country’s economy was growing fast. But this year’s Brazil has just been through a deep recession and a corruption scandal and Lula is in prison. Brazil is now represented by Mr Jair Bolsonaro, a president famous for insulting gays and praising torturers. As an advocate of liberal economic reforms, Mr Bolsonaro had a chance to repackage himself for the Davos audience. But his appearance at this year’s forum was brief and stilted. Other former Davos darlings have followed a similar trajectory. Turkey was once the star country. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was hailed as the model of a moderate Islamist leader, presiding over a country that was both democratic and capitalist. But he stalked out of Davos in 2009 after an onstage row about Israel – and has never returned. These days, he is increasingly authoritarian and his country is teetering on the edge of a debt crisis. The apparent transformation of the Russian elite from faceless

apparatchiks into raucous, rough-edged capitalists was also one of the wonders of the WEF. But, ever since the invasion of Crimea in 2014, Russia has been in the Davos doghouse. Britain has disappointed Davos by voting for Brexit – and merely baffled delegates at this year’s conference by draping vast banners over the Belvedere Hotel proclaiming, “Free trade is great”. Mr Donald “Tariff Man” Trump is clearly not somebody who would endorse that WEF-friendly slogan. The United States President stayed away from the forum this year to deal with a government shutdown.

In the corridors of the World Economic Forum last week, Harvard economist Kenneth Rogoff summed it up: “This is the flattest Davos I can remember. Normally, there is a star country or a star industry that everybody is talking about. But this year, there is nothing.”

China’s claim to be “star country” is also tarnished. Slowing growth, rising antagonism with the US and increasingly authoritarian politics at home make President Xi Jinping’s government an increasingly tough sell in Davos. That leaves India, or “Incredible India” as it branded itself in a public relations blitz at Davos 2006. Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a slick appearance at the WEF last year. But since then, news has reached Davos that economic reforms have slowed in India and central bank independence is under threat. So even India seems less incredible this year. As a result, this year’s search for star countries and politicians in Davos reached into the second tier – with Austria and Ethiopia getting positive attention. The 32-year-old Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz is a smooth performer and is pursuing liberal economic reforms. One German pundit enthused: “I would love him to be chancellor of Germany, but we have had unfortunate experiences with Austrians in the past.” Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came across like one of the Davos heroes of the early 1990s with his talk of releasing political prisoners, peace treaties with neighbours, regional economic integration and (of course) liberal economic reform. But positive change in Ethiopia is not enough to change the global mood. In the past, when politicians have seemed particularly hopeless, Davosites have turned to industry for inspiration. But the technology groups are mired in controversy and the future they represent looks increasingly dystopian. Davos is also the place where legacy industries rebrand themselves as futuristic. Oil companies talk about renewables and car companies show off their electric vehicles. But this year, the oil companies are reeling from shareholder divestment drives and the German car companies are still struggling with the aftermath of the diesel scandals. So there was no cheer to be found there. It seems as if the world has disappointed Davos. But, then again, maybe Davos has disappointed the world. FINANCIAL TIMES

Vietnam should repeal new law choking cross-border data flows

Charlene Barshefsky

Vietnam’s new cyber-security law, which took effect on Jan 1, represents a significant step backwards for the country’s economy. By restricting data flows, the law will discourage investment by global, cutting-edge companies in data-intensive industries. To minimise the damage, Vietnam should reverse course and repeal it. Vietnam’s decades-long economic reform agenda has lifted the country from post-war poverty to a more modern, increasingly dynamic economy in the span of a single generation. A key pillar of the reforms has been openness to international trade and investment – facilitated by Vietnam’s 2007 entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and, more recently, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). Unfortunately, its new law threatens to undermine this progress. The law requires all companies, foreign and domestic, to store personal data of Vietnamese users in Vietnam, and establish a branch or representative office in Vietnam, if certain conditions are met, including the receipt of a request from the Ministry of Public Security. This “data localisation requirement” applies economy-wide, and the ministry will likely have unfettered discretion in applying it. This is only one of several problematic provisions in the law, which also requires foreign companies to open up local offices, undergo onerous cyber-security audits, and so on. As reported in The Straits Times, the ministry has said that the law is aimed at staving off cyber attacks and weeding out “hostile and reactionary forces”. Yet despite its name, the law will contribute little, if anything, to cyber security. In fact, the data localisation requirement will make companies more vulnerable to cyber attack, not less. Global businesses routinely protect personal data by “sharding” or fragmenting the data and storing it in multiple locations worldwide. The Vietnamese law discourages such practices and makes them less effective. It is also bad economic policy, as a growing body of research shows. A 2016 study by the McKinsey Global Institute found that globalisation is increasingly defined by cross-border data flows, which are soaring and now generate even more economic value worldwide than trade in goods. A study by the European Centre for International Political Economy (ECIPE) last year found that restrictions on cross-border data flows reduce service imports by 5 per cent on average, and reduce firm- and industry-level

productivity by 4.5 per cent – with an even stronger impact in data-intensive sectors such as retail and information services. Another ECIPE study found that Vietnam’s gross domestic product would be 1.7 per cent higher if it lifted restrictions on cross-border data flows. The law is particularly counterproductive given Vietnam’s pressing need for foreign investment in high-tech sectors. Vietnam 2035 – a study issued jointly in 2016 by the World Bank and Vietnam’s Ministry of Planning and Investment – recommends that the country create a favourable policy environment for technologies such as social mobility, analytics, cloud services, e-commerce, and 3D printing, to enable the Vietnamese economy as a whole to shift to higher-value industries. Yet the law threatens to stymie these very sectors. Vietnam’s neighbours and regional trading partners – including Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Australia and Japan – support cross-border data flows and the use of cloud technology. Indonesia too is considering amending domestic regulations to facilitate cross-border data flows. In the near term, these countries stand to gain from the ongoing US-China trade tensions, as global companies seek to diversify away from China while retaining a presence in the region. In the long term, these countries are (to varying degrees) well-positioned to benefit from the Fourth Industrial Revolution and other global technological changes on the horizon. By moving in the opposite direction, Vietnam risks falling behind. Vietnam’s own tech sector recognises this. Last June, a coalition of telecommunications and tech associations sent a letter to the National Assembly raising concerns about the law’s impact on the sector. The law also raises questions about Vietnam’s adherence to its international legal obligations. Under the WTO’s General Agreement on Trade in Services, Vietnam is obligated not to discriminate against foreign suppliers of computer and related services. Moreover, the CPTPP prohibits data localisation requirements and requires parties to allow cross-border data flows, including flows of personal data, for business purposes. The law appears to run counter to these commitments. It is already tarnishing Vietnam’s international reputation. According to the United States Chamber of Commerce, 61 per cent of companies surveyed said they would be less likely to invest in Vietnam due to the law, and 89 per cent said the measure would make Vietnam’s digital economy less competitive. Vietnam should repeal the law as soon as possible. This offers the best hope for preventing it from further undermining Vietnam’s broader economic agenda.

• Charlene Barshefsky, who served as the Clinton administration’s US trade representative from 1997 to 2001, is senior international partner at global law firm WilmerHale.

This 100-year-old essay holds clues for defeating Trump

Noah Feldman

Yesterday marked the 100th anniversary of the most important political essay of the 20th century, Politics As A Vocation, by German sociologist and legal theorist Max Weber. The essay includes a topical lesson for Americans as candidates announce their plans to take on US President Donald Trump in the 2020 election: Politics isn’t the realm of pure, absolute moral conscience, where everything can be described as right or wrong, black or white. Politics is the domain of what Weber called the “ethic of responsibility” – a careful balancing of interests with an eye on the real-world consequences of political choices. If the candidates – or the voters –

make the mistake of treating the effort to defeat Mr Trump as a moral crusade, rather than a political battle to be won on the ground, the result may be that Mr Trump gets re-elected, and the failure discredits politics itself. Weber gave the lecture that became the essay in the midst of the German revolution that followed the country’s defeat in World War I. His audience was a group of students in Munich, convening at a time when socialism was the youth culture and appeared in the ascendant. Weber, in contrast, was a 54-year-old liberal – a point he made memorably in the lecture: “The fact that someone is 20 years of age and that I am over 50 is no cause for me to think that this alone is an achievement before which I am overawed.” Politics As A Vocation includes many rich ideas, from a famous

statement of the types of political legitimacy, to a discussion of former US president Andrew Jackson and modern party politics, to the accurate prophecy that Germany was only a decade away from a “polar night of icy darkness and hardness”. The idea that is most important now, however, is Weber’s distinction between two ways of seeing the world: an ethic of “absolute ends”, sometimes translated as the “ethic of conscience” or of “moral conviction”, and an ethic of responsibility. The ethic of conscience, according to Weber, is the world view of religion, exemplified in Christian teachings: “Take all you have and give it to the poor”, “Turn the other cheek”, and “All they that take the sword shall perish by the sword”. The “absolute ethic of the

gospel”, Weber argued, is “no joking matter”. Jesus’s moral commands require a renunciation of power in all its forms. Such absolute morality, Weber explained, is inconsistent with politics – because politics is centrally concerned with power. That power didn’t blink from the fact that power in the real world is exercised in the shadow of the possibility of violence. Instead, he used that reality to offer his account of the core value of politics: responsibility for consequences. The politician’s “ethic of responsibility” is a way of seeing the world that always asks something like, what will actually happen as a result of what we choose to do? That question leads to very different choices from pure morality – so much so that Weber bluntly asserted: “It is in the nature of officials of high moral standing

to be poor politicians, and above all, in the political sense of the word, to be irresponsible politicians.” To be sure, Weber didn’t want politicians with no moral backbone at all. He believed a politician would eventually reach a point where he would draw the line and say (as did Martin Luther when he was told to retract his Protestantism): “Here I stand, I can do no other.” In other words, Weber wasn’t an absolutist about rejecting absolutism. His ideal politician supplemented a sense of responsibility with “passion” and “a sense of proportion”. The lessons for the coming push to beat Mr Trump are immediate and important. Faced with a president whose behaviour flouts America’s deepest moral values, it is very tempting to think that the correct political response is to insist on moral truths, and to point

out how immoral Mr Trump is. Moral arguments in politics are fine – so long as they are oriented towards winning. But there is a great risk that a campaign focused on the purity and morality of the candidates and their beliefs and records will not produce a candidate who can beat Mr Trump. The ethic of responsibility says that politicians have to account campaigns that can actually win. That means compromise – including compromise on issues that are value-laden when seen from the standpoint of morality. To beat Mr Trump, a candidate needs to win over at least some people who voted for Mr Trump in 2016. Those voters probably don’t want to spend the whole campaign hearing how deplorable they are, or were. Nothing would be easier for Democrats and independents than to treat the 2020 election as a morality play. And nothing would be more irresponsible. BLOOMBERG

• Noah Feldman is a professor of law at Harvard University.

BIG PICTURE



WEATHER

Windy, with passing showers in the afternoon.
High 33 deg C **Low** 24 deg C
24-hr PSI as of 6pm yesterday: 38 to 52 (Moderate)



PHOTO: XINHUA

Combing history

A collection of unusual combs from Central Africa went on display at the Brafa Art Fair, located at the historic Tour and Taxis site in Brussels.

The Didier Claes Gallery, which brought in the collection, is among the 133 Belgian and international galleries participating

in the 64th edition of one of the world's oldest and most prestigious art and antiques fairs that is on until Sunday.

Founded in 1956, the Brafa Art Fair attracted over 65,000 visitors last year. Art pieces on display date as far back as the Bronze Age, covering some five mil-

lennia of art history. Many different art disciplines are represented, from furniture to photographs.

Visitors to the fair can also attend daily Brafa Art Talks given by experts from the art world on topics such as "What makes a masterpiece?".



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B| HOME

With the video-conferencing facilities, we hope to make our social service offices the first port of call and, hopefully, the only port of call for those who are in need of services and programmes, so that they don't have to run to many places.

MRS SAM TAN, Minister of State for Social and Family Development, about the social service offices in Geylang Serai and Bedok where individuals can connect with agencies such as the Housing Board, SG Enable and the Special Needs Trust Company to have their queries addressed. **B2**

A collection truck pouring food waste into a bunker for treatment.



Trash to treasure: Turning waste to energy

PUB, NEA find a way to mix used water sludge with scraps to produce biogas that can power water reclamation plants

Cheryl Teh

What gets flushed down the toilet daily may be worth its weight in gold.

A two-year trial by Singapore's national water agency PUB and the National Environment Agency (NEA) has found a way to ensure that used water sludge is not wasted.

Mix what is flushed down the loo with table scraps, and the stomach-churning recipe becomes a potent recipe for energy.

If it is scaled up, the biogas produced in the process can power a large portion of Singapore's water reclamation plants.

This is a prime example of how Singapore is turning trash to trea-

sure, particularly in view of 2019 being designated as the Republic's Year Towards Zero Waste.

The trial, which started in December 2016, involved 40 tonnes of used water sludge (from toilets) and food waste treated at the PUB's facility in Old Toh Tuck Road.

Two truckloads arrive daily from 23 premises across Singapore, including Maju Camp, University Town at the National University of Singapore and food distributor Tian Sheng Fresh Produce.

The sludge and food waste are combined, and will go through what the agencies call "anaerobic digestion", also known as a biological process that breaks down organic materials to produce biogas - a natural fuel that is produced when or-

ganic matter reacts with bacteria.

The sludge and food waste were previously digested separately to produce biogas. But when combined, the PUB and NEA found the biogas yield tripled, compared with when used water sludge was digested alone.

Also, the biogas yield from combined digestion was about 40 per cent more than when food waste and water sludge were digested separately at the facility.

The agencies are aiming for this co-digestion process to provide the large amounts of energy required daily to treat used water.

They hope it will maximise the recovery of resources from food waste, while letting Singapore take a step towards energy self-sufficiency in the used water treatment process.

But only 16 per cent of food waste, a major waste stream here, is recycled, said Mr Tan Meng Dui,

NEA's chief executive. He added that the rate is low, compared with Singapore's overall recycling rate of about 60 per cent.

"As the second-largest waste stream disposed of, there is great potential to not only reduce food wastage at the point of consumption, but also to recycle better by developing technologies to turn food waste into higher-value products, like biogas for energy recovery," Mr Tan said.

40%

How much more biogas yield from the combined digestion of food waste and water sludge, compared with when they are digested separately, at the PUB's facility in Old Toh Tuck Road.

"We look forward to the continued support of the community and industry to co-create zero waste solutions in this Year Towards Zero Waste," he added.

Mr Harry Seah, PUB assistant chief executive for future systems and technology, said: "Positive results from the trial show it is possible to make the used water treatment process in water reclamation plants more energy self-sufficient."

Mr Seah added that as a result of the technology's success, the process is likely to be scaled up, in the form of co-locating the facilities of water sludge and food waste treatment at the new Tuas Nexus.

The Tuas Nexus, comprising the Integrated Waste Management Facility and Tuas Water Reclamation Plant, is scheduled to be completed in 2025.

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Workers at food distributor Tian Sheng Fresh Produce packing apples and picking out rotting ones, which will be set aside as food waste that is combined with water sludge to be treated at PUB's facility in Old Toh Tuck Road. ST PHOTOS: CHONG JUN LIANG

Workers at food distributor Tian Sheng Fresh Produce packing apples and picking out rotting ones, which will be set aside as food waste that is combined with water sludge to be treated at PUB's facility in Old Toh Tuck Road. ST PHOTOS: CHONG JUN LIANG



Auxiliary police officer Chan Yubo (third from right) with Thomas the labrador retriever and other dog handlers at Certis K-9, which will work alongside auxiliary police and aviation security officers. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

Certis Cisco launches first auxiliary police K-9 unit

Fabian Koh

He is an avid dog lover who is working as an auxiliary police officer with Certis Cisco.

When the chance came for Mr Chan Yubo, 23, to mix both his career and interest, he responded quickly.

He is one of the first nine dog handlers in Certis Cisco's new K-9 unit, which was launched yesterday at the Certis Cisco Centre in Paya Lebar.

Certis K-9, the first auxiliary police K-9 unit in Singapore, will work alongside auxiliary police and aviation security officers to safeguard key installations here.

These include airports, sea ports, transport hubs and major events where human traffic is high.

Mr Chan, an auxiliary police officer for almost five years, said: "I really love dogs. I have a small chihuahua at home. When I heard of this opportunity, I decided to join immediately."

He was paired with Thomas, a labrador retriever, when he joined the unit in September last year. He said: "Thomas has a lot of patience and we get along perfectly. There's time for work and also for play. He especially likes his squishy ball."

Certis, a security organisation which delivers multi-disciplinary security and integrated services, will start with 10 dogs.

One dog is currently undergoing explosives detection training in Britain.

The dogs are of various breeds, such as labrador retrievers and english springer spaniels, and aged between one and 1½ years.

They will be in service until they are retired at about eight years old, after which they will be put up for adoption. This procedure is similar to their counterparts in the Singapore Police Force (SPF).

The dogs are brought in from Britain and the Netherlands, and undergo the same training as their SPF counterparts.

Mr Matthew Ng, commanding officer of the enforcement and events division of the Certis auxil-

iary police force, said the K-9 unit was formed to counter the heightened security threat here.

He said: "Dogs are extremely intelligent and certain breeds can be trained to detect contraband and explosives."

The dogs, he said, will be assigned to tasks such as cargo screening and deterrence patrols.

He added that canines may sometimes be better than humans or machines in carrying out screening work.

For example, a team of two officers would take 20 to 30 minutes to thoroughly check a vehicle, using equipment such as undercarriage mirrors. But a dog can complete the task in just five to 10 min-

Meet the dogs of Certis K-9



SCAN TO WATCH



<http://str.sg/k9unit>

utes, according to Mr Ng.

Certis plans to eventually increase the team of dogs to 24, although there is no timeline, as it would depend on market requirements.

Mr Ng said "significant investment" went into starting this new unit.

A new kennel is being built for the Certis K-9 unit in Toh Tuck Crescent, and it will have grooming and training facilities. It is expected to be completed between June and September.

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Social service offices go the extra mile for clients

Use of video conferences to link individuals with other agencies helps save them hassle of travel

Shabana Begum

To save clients with multiple needs the hassle of travelling between different agencies, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) is providing video-conferencing services at two social service offices to connect individuals with the agencies they need to reach. MSF said plans are under way to set up video conferencing at more social service offices and include more agencies. The two social service offices in Geylang Serai and Bedok started their pilot of the service last month. Through it, individuals can speak directly to officers at the Housing

Board, SG Enable or the Special Needs Trust Company to have their queries addressed. This saves them a trip to the agency offices, as well as paperwork, as the social service officers at the social service office can help forward the relevant documents and details. During a visit to the Geylang Serai office yesterday, Minister of State for Social and Family Development Sam Tan said: "Over the years, we have realised that when families or individuals need the service and help from SSO (social service office), often they are in a very complex situation. They have many different complex needs. "With the video-conferencing facilities, we hope to make our SSOs the first port of call and, hopefully, the only port of call for those who are in need of services and programmes, so that they don't have to run to many places." Eight people have used the video-

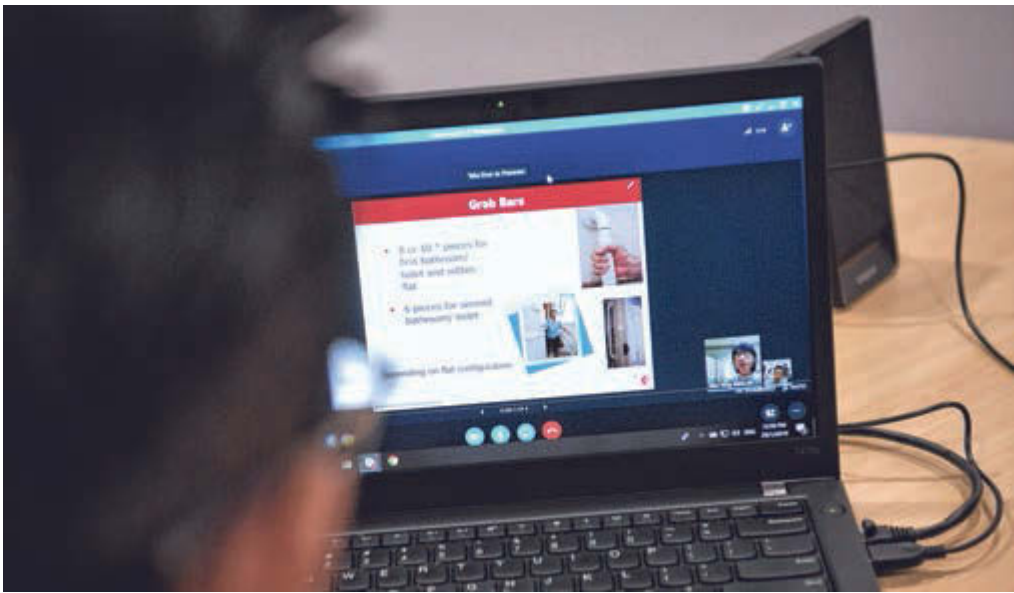
conferencing services at the two social service offices to communicate with HDB officers. One of them, Ms Tuminah Ahmad, 58, spoke to an HDB officer to request to continue paying a subsidised rental rate after her tenancy is renewed in March. That same day, HDB sent Ms Tuminah, who used to work as a part-time cleaner, a letter to notify her that her eligibility for the rental reduction was being reviewed. Ms Tuminah, a diabetes and cancer patient who has to attend multiple medical appointments, said: "The video conference was good because it was convenient and it did not waste my time. Due to my disease, I'm very weak. If I went to HDB directly, I might have to wait a few hours." In a similar vein, MSF has been working with government agencies to co-locate complementary services near social service offices. For instance, in July last year, a Sil-

CONVENIENT AND TIME-SAVING The video conference was good because it was convenient and it did not waste my time. Due to my disease, I'm very weak. If I went to HDB directly, I might have to wait a few hours.

MS TUMINAH AHMAD, 58, a diabetes and cancer patient who has to attend multiple medical appointments.

ver Generation Office satellite office in MacPherson moved to Geylang Serai to be located near the social service office there. Their proximity allows officers of both agencies to jointly interview elderly residents who have complex needs. These initiatives are in line with MSF's plan to progressively strengthen social service delivery in the coming years.

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Video conferencing is offered at two social service offices in Geylang Serai and Bedok as part of a pilot. Users can speak to officers at the HDB, SG Enable or the Special Needs Trust Company. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

NEA lifts Mandarin Orchard's banquet suspension

Mandarin Orchard Hotel reopened its grand ballroom and resumed banquet kitchen operations yesterday as the National Environment Agency (NEA) lifted the suspension nearly two months after a norovirus outbreak. NEA is satisfied the hotel has implemented the measures required to rectify lapses detected in joint investigations by the authorities, an NEA statement said yesterday.

A total of 333 people reported suffering gastroenteritis symptoms after attending five separate events at the grand ballroom between Dec 1 and 3 last year. Fourteen were hospitalised and later discharged.

NEA said the banquet kitchen serving the grand ballroom was suspended for 55 days from Dec 5 to Jan 28 to protect consumers from public health risks. During this period, the hotel was instructed to do thorough cleaning and disinfection of the ballroom.

In their joint investigations, the Ministry of Health, NEA and the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority found strong evidence that the gastroenteritis outbreak was due to severe contamination of the ballroom with the highly contagious norovirus. This resulted from poor environmental and hygiene practices, such as improper cleaning of vomit from an incident in the grand ballroom before Dec 1.

Norovirus was detected in the stool samples of 26 affected consumers, three food handlers and 51 service staff, including banquet servers who reportedly continued working while they were ill, the statement said.

Environmental swabs collected from the grand ballroom also detected norovirus on the wall panel, carpet, table tops, chairs, unused tablecloths, cutlery and drinking glasses in the ballroom.

NEA said the hotel has since complied with the stipulated measures, such as disposing of all ready-to-eat, thawed and perishable food items. The hotel has also cleaned and sanitised the premises.

NEA added that all food handlers have since attended and passed the basic food hygiene course again.

Under the enhanced Food Hygiene Officer scheme announced last month, these officers are required to re-attend the WSQ Conduct Food and Beverage Hygiene Audit course if their food establishment has had its licence suspended.

The establishment must also have a trained food hygiene officer before it can resume operations.

Mandarin Orchard's food hygiene officer has undergone training again and passed the course.

Hotel manager Danny Wong said in response to The Straits Times' queries that Mandarin Orchard is committed to investing resources into an enhanced food safety and sanitation programme across its operations.

"We recognise there is much to be done and we are a long way from winning back the trust and confidence of our customers," he said.

NEA said it is currently reviewing the investigation findings and will take appropriate action against the hotel for the lapses. It will continue to place the hotel under close surveillance to ensure that it adheres to its food hygiene plans.

For feedback on hygiene lapses, the public can call NEA's 24-hour hotline on 1800-225-5632.

Ng Huiwen

Vital to talk about death and dying: President Halimah

Rei Kurohi

While conversations about death and dying may be difficult or culturally taboo, it is important to have them. These conversations can help caregivers understand their patients' desires for the last days of their lives, said President Halimah Yacob on the sidelines of a visit to Dover Park Hospice in Novena yesterday. "People prefer to be among their loved ones. Only when that is not possible do they come to in-patient services like Dover Park Hospice," Madam Halimah said after a tour of the facilities, where she met employees and several terminally ill residents with their family members.

The visit was part of her community engagement efforts with elderly people.

Dover Park Hospice offers both in-patient and home-based hospice care services, and has served more than 12,000 patients and their families since it opened in 1992.

It is Singapore's first purpose-built hospice and a beneficiary of the President's Challenge, an annual community outreach and fund-raising campaign.

Madam Halimah noted the positive feedback she had received from residents and their families of the hospice's services and staff. "It is important to ensure that we



Cancer patient Mary Tang with President Halimah Yacob and Dover Park Hospice medical director Ong Wah Ying. The support of hospice staff, volunteers and fellow residents helped Madam Tang come to terms with her mother's death early last month. ST PHOTO: REI KUROHI

continue to give strong support for affordable, accessible and good quality palliative care so that people can die in dignity," she said. During the visit, Madam Halimah met Madam Mary Tang, a cancer patient who has been a resident at Dover Park Hospice for three months. The 62-year-old showed Madam Halimah a photo album, which included photographs of her recent visit to Gardens By the Bay. She said residents would go on

TALKING ABOUT ANYTHING In the hospice, everyone is sick, so we can talk about anything. When talking to family, we don't want them to worry, so there are things we wouldn't talk to them about.

MADAM MARY TANG, who has been at Dover Park Hospice for three months.

short trips with volunteers every Thursday, if their doctors deemed them well enough, and added that the recent trip was one she needed. When her mother, who was in her 90s, died in Sengkang General Hospital early last month, Madam Tang was so distraught that she did not go out for three weeks. With the support of hospice staff and volunteers, and through conversations with fellow residents, Madam Tang was able to come to terms with her mother's death.

Unfortunately, about three weeks ago, Madam Tang's close friend and a fellow resident, also died. "We have to make use of the time we have. In the hospice, everyone is sick, so we can talk about anything," she said in Mandarin, dabbing away tears. "When talking to family, we don't want them to worry, so there are things we wouldn't talk to them about."

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Higher speed limits for 8-seater cars, likely for some cranes too

Heavyweight mobile cranes are likely to be allowed to move faster on the road. The Land Transport Authority (LTA) said yesterday that a trial commencing on Friday will allow mobile cranes with a laden weight exceeding 24,000kg to be driven at 40kmh. Currently, such cranes have a speed limit of 20kmh. The LTA said it had received feedback from the industry that the speed limit of 20kmh "is too low, resulting in longer travelling time on the road which may cause driver fatigue".

It added: "This decision takes into account improvements in vehicle technology and design that allow mobile cranes to travel safely at higher speeds." It is also in line with the practice in other places such as Australia, Hong Kong and Britain. Separately, the LTA said the current 70kmh speed limit for eight-seater passenger cars will be lifted. The authority cited "advancements in vehicle safety standards" for doing away with the limit from Friday. "With this change, eight-seater passenger cars will be required to observe only the same road speed limit

its as other passenger cars. This is in line with the practice in other countries," a spokesman added. This change is not expected to affect many cars, as eight-seater passenger vehicles form a small percentage of cars here. Diversified Prime group, for instance, said eight-seaters made up 8 per cent of its total passenger car sales of 400-plus in 2017. But last year, this cohort dwindled to almost zero when new emission rulings rendered them commercially unviable. Nissan agent Tan Chong Motor said these cars made up less than 1 per cent of sales last year. Industry players also said that it was near impossible to enforce the 70kmh speed limit because the vehicles were identical to their seven-seater variants.

Christopher Tan

TOTO

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(From left) Straits Times senior executive sub-editor Toh Yong Chuan moderating the Human Capital Partnership-Singapore Press Holdings Forum on employee engagement with panellists, Ms Rebecca Chew, deputy managing partner of Rajah & Tann; Mr Zaqy Mohamad, Minister of State for Manpower and National Development; Mr Chia Yoong Hui, chairman and chief executive of Ascenz Solutions; Ms Audrey Cheong, managing director for Federal Express Singapore; and Mr Sean Tan, principal and consulting services leader of Mercer Singapore; at the SPH auditorium last week. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

Develop human capital to engage staff

Brought to you by



Bosses should make the effort to engage employees to talk about their career plans, amid worries about how technology is disrupting businesses and changing jobs.

Having conversations with workers about where the company is heading and their role in the transformation builds trust, said Minister of State for Manpower and National Development Zaqy Mohamad.

He was among five speakers at the Human Capital Partnership-Singapore Press Holdings (HCP-SPH) Forum on employee engagement last week.

They talked about the importance of having an open work culture and a system to gather robust feedback from staff and act on it.

Besides Mr Zaqy, the other panelists were Ms Rebecca Chew, deputy managing partner at law firm Rajah & Tann; Mr Chia Yoong Hui, chairman and chief executive of maritime technology company Ascenz Solutions; Ms Audrey Cheong, managing director for Federal Express Singapore; and Mr Sean Tan, principal and consulting services leader at Mercer Singapore.

Leaders who care and build a company culture that resonates with workers can attract staff, said the panellists.

Also, while talent development is a key strategy in retaining workers, it is a two-way street. Employees will also need to take ownership of their own careers and growth.

Ascenz Solutions, Rajah & Tann and FedEx are part of the HCP programme, which was launched in 2017 to recognise progressive employers committed to developing staff.

The Straits Times also posed questions on the topic of employee engagement to human resources experts at four other Human Capital Partner firms in a virtual round-table.

Here are some key takeaways from their responses.

THE 'X' FACTOR FOR SUCCESS

Employee engagement has been identified as the key ingredient in the recipe for success above the competition, said Mr Phan Yoke Fei, senior director for human resources and corporate administration at Gardens by the Bay.

This is especially important in today's context, where disruption is affecting businesses on a global scale and at unprecedented speed, he said. Some employees may find the challenges too daunting and look for alternative employers, in the hope of avoiding trouble in their careers.

"Very committed employees who are fully engaged with the organisation will try their very best to weather through the challenges with the same organisation," he said.

Ms Kang Mui Leng, head of human resources at equipment dealer Tractors Singapore, said that showing employees they are valued and empowered helps in developing and maintaining a long-term relationship with them.



STAYING THROUGH CHANGES

Very committed employees who are fully engaged with the organisation will try their very best to weather through the challenges with the same organisation.



MR PHAN YOKE FEI, senior director for human resources and corporate administration at Gardens by the Bay, on the importance of employee engagement.

"It is important as it affects the continuity of the business," she said.

Ms Jacqueline Gwee, director and founder of aAdvantage Consulting Group, added that engaged employees are also likely to recommend the organisation as a good place to work.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT EMPLOYEES WANT

So how best can companies engage employees? A common practice is to gather feedback through surveys or dialogues.

Ms Kang said monthly dialogues with Tractors' managing director are used to gather feedback, which is then discussed during management meetings.

She said this has been a successful tool for the firm and has likely contributed to halving the number of resignations last year, compared with 2017.

"Based on the feedback from new staff, some are surprised and most are happy to be able to sit down over breakfast and chat with the managing director casually. In addition, they get to know new colleagues from other departments," she said.

Tractors has 285 employees.

Engagement is also about understanding each employee's unique combination of strengths and weaknesses, as well as his desires, which may change over time.

"Employees go through different 'stages', and their needs and priorities evolve and change with time," said Ms Jacinta Low, head of human resources planning at OCBC Bank.

For example, the bank commissions task forces to implement suggestions that emerge from the annual employee engagement survey.

These have included work-life balance initiatives such as an in-house childcare centre and a Primary School Leaving Examination leave scheme, said Ms Low.

It can be a challenge for human resources teams to keep up with the issues raised through dialogues and continue to provide updates in a systematic manner, said Mr Phan.



BREAKFAST WITH THE BOSS

Based on the feedback from new staff, some are surprised and most are happy to be able to sit down over breakfast and chat with the managing director casually. In addition, they get to know new colleagues from other departments.



MS KANG MUI LENG, head of human resources at Tractors Singapore, on getting feedback through dialogues.

Three objectives of programme

The HCP programme is a tripartite initiative comprising a community of employers who are committed to developing their human capital and progressive employment practices in their organisations.

The programme aims to achieve three major outcomes:

- Develop a stronger Singaporean core by investing in the development of local employees across all levels;

But technology now makes it possible to have "live" platforms for feedback with almost verbatim record-keeping, which reduces confusion in interpreting responses. This makes it easier for the HR team to follow up, Mr Phan said.

Small firms may not need to conduct costly pulse surveys to gauge what employees want from their jobs, he added. The intimate connections and a family-like environment can also help the bosses get a good sense of things.

GOOD LEADERSHIP

People working in small firms tend to interact with management more, while those in larger organisations may have fewer regular encounters with business leaders.

Hence, communication is something leaders of larger organisations should pay special attention to, said Ms Gwee, especially as "inspiring leaders" was one of the top two priority areas affecting employee engagement, according to her firm's research.

For leaders to inspire, they need to communicate the rationale for changes, especially as many businesses are transforming, she said.

"People want to know the 'why', whereas in many organisations, we focus on the 'how' and 'what'. It is the 'why' that will inspire the change."

Leaders must provide direction,



TWO-WAY RELATIONSHIP

Employee engagement is about the relationship between the employee and the organisation, and, to succeed in today's business world, this two-way relationship needs to be a healthy one.



MS JACINTA LOW, head of human resources planning at OCBC Bank, on telling employees about business challenges.

For more information, contact the programme office, Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices, at: Tel: 6302-2782 E-mail: hcpartner@tafep.sg Website: www.tafep.sg

ensure the team is aligned in working towards the same goal and provide the required support, she said.

DEVELOPING TALENT AND RECOGNISING CONTRIBUTIONS

Workers naturally feel valued when an organisation recognises their contributions and successes.

A study by aAdvantage found that "employee recognition" was among the top key words chosen by employees from 2015 to last year, in terms of the workplace culture they wished to see, said Ms Gwee.

Her consultancy, which has about 30 employees, works with companies to identify the capabilities and attitudes staff and leaders need, so that they can provide suitable training, coaching and career development opportunities.

This can improve the company's ability to attract and retain staff, as they see the organisation as a place to learn and grow their careers.

Ms Low highlighted the OCBC Future Smart programme, which is a three-year training programme to reskill the bank's 29,000 global workforce in the face of digital disruption.

The bank is investing \$20 million in it. The programme has four qualification levels and covers areas such as digital business models, technology and data, and customer-centricity.

A cheque-processing executive



POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

The HCP programme is a community of like-minded employers with common beliefs on how we want to create and sustain a positive employee experience for our people, which will lead us to organisational success.



MS JACQUELINE GWEЕ, director and founder of aAdvantage Consulting Group, on the benefits of the HCP programme.

should be able to become a data scientist in three years through the courses, she added.

LEARNING FROM ONE ANOTHER

Companies can also stay on top of efforts to engage staff by sharing knowledge and best practices.

Ms Gwee said this is one of the benefits of being in the HCP programme. "(It) is a community of like-minded employers with common beliefs on how we want to create and sustain a positive employee experience for our people, which will lead us to organisational success," she said.

There are platforms such as forums, events and online bulletins through which employers can learn from one another, she said.

The HCP programme is managed by the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices. There are now 221 firms recognised as Human Capital Partners.

Mr Phan said being able to exchange ideas removes the need for costly experiments in new HR practices by individual companies, a boon for an organisation like his, which employs 360 staff.

EMPLOYEES HAVE A PART TO PLAY

While employers should put in the effort to understand and develop employees, workers can also help their companies create a work environment where they can thrive.

They can do this by giving their honest feedback through the channels provided by the company, said Ms Kang. They must also be willing to engage in changes that are necessary for improvement, both in their work and the work environment, she said.

Ms Low said OCBC tells employees about business challenges it needs to address, so that they can also take positive action to further the bank's interest.

"Employee engagement is about the relationship between the employee and the organisation, and, to succeed in today's business world, this two-way relationship needs to be a healthy one," she said.

History comes alive in augmented-reality trail

A new trail by the Singapore River allows users to rediscover stories of Singapore's past. It is accessible via an app called BalikSG, which can be downloaded for free. Covering all its eight stops requires about two hours. Here are some highlights:

1 RAFFLES' LANDING

Location: In front of the Raffles Landing Site next to the Asian Civilisations Museum

The National Heritage Board reimagines what the conversation is like between Sir Stamford Raffles and Major-General William Farquhar upon setting foot in Singapore. Clearly, there's a sense of urgency to quickly establish a trading post.



Raffles: So, tell me, Farquhar, who's in command here?
Farquhar: Temenggong Abdul Rahman, sir.
Raffles: Is it right that we sign the treaty with Temenggong Abdul Rahman? We should get a sultan to sign the treaty.
Farquhar: We discussed the possibility of installing Tengku Hussein Shah as the sultan. He is the elder brother after all.
Raffles: And where is Tengku Hussein?
Farquhar: The Riau Islands, sir. We proposed that Tengku Hussein be invited to come here and meet us.
Raffles: Have you not done this already?
Farquhar: We wished to consult you first, for this is an important matter.
Raffles: Yes, do it, but select reliable men. This matter must remain secret. I would like Tengku Hussein to be here in three days.

2 CROSSING BRIDGES

Location: In front of Elgin Bridge

The app captures the evolution of various historical connectors, such as Elgin Bridge, Cavenagh Bridge and Anderson Bridge. Users can see for themselves what the bridges used to look like in old photos.



3 SIGNING OF THE 1819 TREATY

Location: In front of the National Gallery Singapore facing the Padang

The app recreates the moment the 1819 treaty was signed between Sir Stamford Raffles, Temenggong Abdul Rahman and Sultan Hussein Shah of Johor. The treaty allowed the British East India Company to set up a trading post in Singapore.



4 SINGAPORE'S FIRST TOWN PLAN

Location: Esplanade Park

A draughtsman's table with a blueprint of where various ethnic communities lived or would come to live at.



5 CHANGING THE COURSE OF HISTORY

Location: Boat Quay in front of UOB Plaza

The app displays what the Singapore River and its surrounds were like in the 1880s.



6 SINGAPORE'S FIRST FINANCIERS

Location: Empress Lawn

The app also features other contributors to Singapore's development, such as the Chettis, a subgroup of the Tamil community who originated from Chettinad in Tamil Nadu, India. Traditionally involved in the trade of precious stones, they later became private bankers and moneylenders, establishing their presence in Singapore as early as the 1820s.



PHOTOS: MARK CHEONG, NATIONAL HERITAGE BOARD TEXT: NATIONAL HERITAGE BOARD, MELODY ZACCHEUS STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Farquhar, not Raffles, the real hero of early modern S'pore: Book

Collection of essays by experts reflects on the shared history between Republic and Britain

Tiffany Fumiko Tay

The person who did the most for the success of Singapore in the crucial first four years of the arrival of the British was not Sir Stamford Raffles but Major-General William Farquhar.

Ambassador-at-large Tommy Koh said this at the launch yesterday of a book that reflects on the shared history between Singapore and the United Kingdom.

Titled 200 Years Of Singapore And The United Kingdom, the book published by Straits Times Press features a series of essays by scholars, historians and subject specialists from both the Republic and the UK.

Professor Koh, who co-edited the book with British High Commissioner to Singapore Scott Wightman, said they both felt "Raffles has been given too much credit, and the first two Residents, William Farquhar and John Crawford, too little, for the success of early Singapore".

While Raffles had laid down a number of broad plans for the new port



Ambassador-at-large Tommy Koh and British High Commissioner to Singapore Scott Wightman at the book launch of 200 Years Of Singapore And The United Kingdom yesterday. ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

in Singapore, he was largely absent.

It was Farquhar who created the circumstances that allowed the port to thrive, according to an essay in the book by Dr Graham Berry, former Scottish Arts Council chief executive. Differences in opinion led Raf-

les to successfully campaign for Farquhar's removal from the island, wrote Dr Berry.

This is among the new insights into Singapore's early colonial history that the collection of essays provides, Prof Koh said at the book

launch at the National Museum of Singapore.

The book begins with two essays on pre-colonial Singapore, before delving into milestones such as the Japanese Occupation during World War II, Singapore's independence in

1965 and the shock withdrawal of British forces.

It also reflects on the British legacy in Singapore, covering its influence in areas such as literature, law, healthcare and education.

Speaking at the event, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Grace Fu said that in the years since independence, Singapore has built on many of the attributes and foundations left by the British, while finding its own footing and identity as a young nation.

The book launch was held 200 years to the date that Raffles and Farquhar first set foot on Singapore to establish a trading post for the East India Company.

It also comes a day after Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong kicked off the Singapore Bicentennial, a year-long commemoration of the founding of modern Singapore.

Prof Koh, who said he aimed to write a balanced account that neither glorified nor vilified Singapore's colonial past, assessed that during their 142-year rule of Singapore, the British did more good than bad. Singapore's relationship with Britain has evolved from that of ruler and ruled to one between equals, with the Republic even surpassing the UK in some aspects, noted Prof Koh.

Mr Wightman said that it has been interesting to observe the different views in Singapore on the significance of the anniversary, the impact of British rule and what it means to be Singaporean, adding that he hopes the book will contribute to the debate.

200 Years Of Singapore And The United Kingdom is available in major bookstores and at www.stbooks.sg for \$35 (with GST).

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SCAN TO WATCH: SINGAPORE'S HISTORY COMES ALIVE

Get up close with Sir Stamford Raffles and Major-General William Farquhar. Try out the National Heritage Board's new augmented-reality trail designed to bring Singapore's history to life. <http://str.sg/balikapp>



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SPHmagazines

SIA opens lab to promote digital innovation

KrisLab is for staff to develop innovative ideas; digital push to enrich total flight experience

Karamjit Kaur
Senior Aviation Correspondent
and Zhaki Abdullah

Singapore Airlines (SIA) officially opened its digital innovation lab KrisLab yesterday, assuring its customers that the push for innovation and smart solutions will not be at their expense.

Speaking at the SIA Group Sports Club near Changi Airport, the airline's chief executive Goh Choon Phong said: "Digital must be an enabler of the SIA experience, rather than a substitute for what we are best known for – service excellence."

"We are fully embracing digitalisation and technology in our business operations in ways that will enhance the pleasure of travel for our customers."

"We aim to enrich every aspect of the way that our customers experience SIA – from pre-flight, in-flight to post-flight."

With KrisLab – which was officially opened by Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing – staff have a workspace to develop innovative ideas and co-innovate with external partners, start-ups, established incubators and accelerators.

The initiative is part of SIA's Digital Innovation Blueprint, which was launched a year ago.

Using data analytics, Internet of Things, as well as virtual and augmented reality, a key aim of the digital push is to improve service standards, for example, by offering customers a more personalised level of service based on their travel patterns and habits, as well as likes and dislikes.

The airline also hopes to develop smart solutions to boost the efficiency of aircraft maintenance processes.

This will help lower maintenance costs and decrease aircraft delays, which will benefit travellers.

SIA is partnering organisations such as the National University of Singapore and the Agency for Science, Technology and Research, with support from the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore and the Economic Development Board.

The group has invested several hundred million dollars in its digitalisation push, said Mr Goh.

At the lab, staff can use and explore technologies such as blockchain, mixed reality devices, artificial intelligence and data analytics, among others, to develop their digital initiatives.

Once an idea has been approved, it will receive seed funding.

The digital innovation lab team will then provide expertise to help develop the idea into a prototype before it moves to the implementation stage.

One of the innovations now being explored at KrisLab involves the use of virtual reality technology to allow designers to step on board a plane and explore or change future cabin design concepts quickly.

KrisLab has already received more than 180 ideas from SIA employees, out of which 50 have been

developed into prototypes.

Of these, about a dozen or so are at the proof-of-concept stage, said Mr Goh. The lab is aimed at nurturing a culture of innovation among SIA staff, he added.

For example, currently in the works is a service that will allow customers to receive notifications regarding events and deals on their phones while overseas – even if it is not connected to a mobile network.

It was proposed by SIA procurement associate Stella Zuo, 30.

The KrisLab team has hosted four rounds of the SIA AppChallenge, where teams from all over the world were invited to compete in an innovation challenge to develop applications that could prove beneficial to SIA and its operations.

The last round attracted more than 1,500 participants from more than 70 countries.

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Mr Kevin Kwa, assistant manager for digital innovation at Singapore Airlines, demonstrating the use of augmented reality in SIA's KrisLab.
ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

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China’s foray into Mid-East may hit obstacles: Bilahari

Issues include growing regional rivalries, anti-Chinese sentiment and country’s relative inexperience in region



Retired diplomat Bilahari Kausikan chairs the National University of Singapore’s Middle East Institute, which is holding a two-day conference at Goodwood Park Hotel next month on China’s Belt and Road Initiative in the Middle East.

Linette Lai
Political Correspondent

China’s foray into the Middle East could hit speed bumps, said retired diplomat Bilahari Kausikan yesterday, as he cautioned Singaporeans against viewing the country’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) through rose-tinted glasses.

The potential issues cited by Mr Kausikan, who chairs the National University of Singapore’s Middle East Institute, include growing regional rivalries, anti-Chinese sentiment in certain countries and China’s relative inexperience in dealing with the Middle East.

“Singaporeans have, by and large, a very romantic view of China... that everything it touches turns to gold,” he said. At the same time, they generally look at the Middle East through the lens of religion, which is “far too narrow”, he added.

In his view, whether China’s involvement is successful or runs into trouble – “and I don’t think it’s a binary choice” – the outcome will impact China and, therefore, this part of the world, he said.

Mr Kausikan was speaking to reporters ahead of a two-day conference on China’s BRI in the Middle East. The conference next month is organised by his institute.

Two of Singapore’s fourth-generation leaders – Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing and Edu-

cation Minister Ong Ye Kung – will speak at the conference and take part in separate dialogues.

Other speakers will discuss topics such as infrastructure development, China’s policy towards Muslims in Xinjiang and the broader geopolitical context.

The BRI is an ambitious development strategy by Chinese President Xi Jinping to revive ancient land and sea trade routes linking Europe, Africa and Asia. It involves large-scale infrastructural project such as building of ports, railways and roads in many countries along the routes, including those in the Middle East, such as Saudi Arabia.

But the BRI, while “potentially game-changing”, is still a vision, Mr Kausikan said.

“It is not a strategy; it is right now very largely a collection of projects,” he said. “We should see it in a balanced way. It is certainly not a substitute for the current American-led international order.”

He highlighted several issues that could be stumbling blocks for China in the Middle East, one of which is growing scepticism in some countries of China’s intentions.

For example, anti-China protests took place in Kazakhstan three years ago, following legal amendments that allow foreigners to rent agricultural land for 25 years, a move locals feared would lead to Chinese farmers acquiring large tracts of land.

China could also find itself caught between growing regional rivalries, Mr Kausikan said. This is especially since China is selling “fairly sophisticated” arms that could tip the balance of power in the region.

Another issue that could derail China’s strategy in the Middle East is its treatment of Muslims in Xinjiang, which may not be sustainable, Mr Kausikan added.

The conference is free and open to the public, who may register on the Middle East Institute’s website.

It will take place at Goodwood Park Hotel on Feb 11 and 12.

NOT A STRATEGY FOR NOW

It is not a strategy; it is right now very largely a collection of projects. We should see it in a balanced way. It is certainly not a substitute for the current American-led international order.



RETIRED DIPLOMAT BILAHARI KAUSIKAN, about the Belt and Road Initiative which, while “potentially game-changing”, is still a vision.

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Police warn activist over racist remarks



Activist Sangeetha Thanapal, known for coining the term “Chinese privilege”, said in a Facebook post last April that Singapore is a “terribly racist country”, where it is constantly reinforced that “only Chinese people” would be able to “save Singapore” while other races are “lazy and violent”. The 36-year-old Singaporean, who lives in Melbourne, was given a stern warning by the police two weeks ago for making these remarks.

Calvin Yang

Activist Sangeetha Thanapal, known here for coining the term “Chinese privilege”, has been given a stern warning by the police over remarks on Facebook that promoted feelings of ill will and hostility between races.

The 36-year-old Singaporean, who lives in Melbourne where she is a researcher, was investigated this month when she returned to Singapore on Jan 2, the police confirmed with The Straits Times yesterday.

Ms Sangeetha, who has since returned to Melbourne, was investigated for her remarks insinuating that the Chinese in Singapore acted in a racist manner towards those of other races.

In a Facebook post last April, Ms Sangeetha called Singapore a “terribly racist country” before going on to make a series of claims.

For instance, she wrote that it is constantly reinforced that “only Chinese people” would be able to “save Singapore”, while other races are “lazy and violent”.

“Her remarks also alleged that the Singapore Government looks down on minority races and has embarked on deliberate policies to favour one race over the others,” the police said in their reply.

In consultation with the Attorney-General’s Chambers, the police issued her a stern warning on Jan 16, “for an offence of promoting

enmity between different groups on grounds of religion or race” under Section 298A of the Penal Code.

Her post was prompted by the Hollywood film Crazy Rich Asians. The movie, touted as a big win for representation of Asian people on screen, was also criticised for a lack of representation of minorities in Singapore, where much of the action is set.

Ms Sangeetha has written extensively about what she calls “Chinese privilege” in Singapore.

Akin to “white privilege” in Western countries, it refers to the claim that the majority race is unable to see things from the viewpoint of the minorities.

Attempts to reach her for comment have been unsuccessful.

However, in a Facebook post three days after being warned, Ms Sangeetha wrote that she had “a very traumatising experience” on her return to Singapore. She said it prompted her to briefly shut down her Facebook page, “as anything we say on the Internet is often used against activists”.

“Right now, I am recuperating and focusing on other things in my life, but I won’t be talking about what happened to me back in Singapore until and unless I know that I can’t be threatened by the long arm of the Singapore state again.”

In August 2015, Ms Sangeetha found herself in a predicament after misrepresenting comments that then Foreign and Law Minister K. Shanmugam had made at a

Singapore Press Club talk, where he spoke of a growing polarisation in Malaysia, with mainstream schools “becoming more and more Malay and Islamic”.

His point was that trends in their education system made integration among the different races a challenge, with Chinese children attending Chinese-medium schools, and Malay children going to mainstream schools.

But in a Facebook post, Ms Sangeetha suggested Mr Shanmugam had made the comments because he considered Malay-Muslims a threat.

Calling Ms Sangeetha’s post “inaccurate and seditious”, Mr Shanmugam said he had initially intended to make a police report.

But he later decided not to do so after meeting Ms Sangeetha, who took down the post and apologised for her comments. The decision to drop the matter was not prompted by her apology, Mr Shanmugam told reporters, but because she did not have the intention to cause ill will between races.

A spokesman for the police said yesterday that they take a stern view of actions that can threaten social harmony here. “Such irresponsible comments can promote feelings of ill will or hostility between different races, and are unacceptable in Singapore’s multiracial and multi-religious society,” the spokesman added.

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Ex-insurance agent gets jail for threatening clients

Identifying himself as fictional characters such as “Lord Voldemort”, an insurance agent sent anonymous threatening messages to some of his clients after they cancelled policies they had bought from him.

Myanmar national Ye Lin Myint, 36, who had worked for Prudential, was also unhappy as several others had not turned up for their appointments.

Yesterday, District Judge Marvin Bay said the Singapore permanent resident’s offences showed a “remarkable degree of planning”, before sentencing him to two years and five months’ jail.

Ye Lin Myint pleaded guilty to five counts of criminal intimidation and eight harassment charges.

Thirty other charges for similar

offences were considered.

The court heard that he targeted 33 people in all, including his former clients and their neighbours.

He sent them threatening letters and e-mails from August to September 2017.

In July 2017, he went on a portal called Protonmail to create e-mail accounts under the names “Lord Voldemort” – the main antagonist from the Harry Potter novels – and “Dr Bruce Banner”, who is comic book character Hulk’s alter ego.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Thi-gaesh Sukumaran said that with Protonmail, netizens do not need to key in their personal information to create accounts on the platform.

He added that Protonmail also does not keep any IP logs which can be linked to the e-mail accounts.

These measures allowed Ye Lin Myint to remain anonymous, the court heard. He also created a bitcoin wallet to receive and transfer the cryptocurrency.

The DPP said: “After he created the Protonmail accounts, the accused also created letters and e-mails... which threatened that harm would befall his clients and their families if one bitcoin was not transferred to the accused’s bitcoin wallet.” At the time of the offences, one bitcoin was equivalent to about \$6,600.

Ye Lin Myint later decided to harass his victims’ neighbours to exert additional pressure on them.

His victims alerted the police and officers arrested him after they conducted an extensive investigation.

The Straits Times understands that none of his victims transferred bitcoins to him. He is out on bail of \$15,000 and was ordered to surrender at the State Courts on Feb 15 to begin his sentence.

Shaffiq Alkhatib

SPH brings cheer to seniors with ‘fortune bags’

Vanessa Liu

A total of 120 “fortune bags” were given out to seniors from the Care Corner Senior Activity Centre in Woodlands yesterday, as part of a Singapore Press Holdings (SPH) annual event to spread festive cheer to the community.

Each bag contained items such as brown rice, biscuits, Milo, coffee and tea bags, mandarin oranges and medicated oil.

Mr Archimedes Rodil, a software engineer from SPHTech division, dressed up as the God of Fortune. “I found it extra interesting because I’m not Chinese,” he said.

“Peeping through the small holes in the costume, I could see the joy and hope in the eyes of the seniors. They rushed to shake my hands, embrace me and put their arms around me,” said the 39-year-old Filipino, who has been working in Singapore since 2010.

“It was worth all the sweat and heat while inside the costume.”

More than 60 senior citizens and 20 volunteers attended the event organised by SPH’s Staff Volunteers Club. Seniors from the centre who did not turn up for the event also received a bag each.

The SPH Cares With Bags Of Love event also comprised a bento lunch, memory games, musical performances by the volunteers and a lucky draw.

The volunteers themselves re-



More than 60 senior citizens and 20 volunteers attended the event organised by SPH’s Staff Volunteers Club. Software engineer Archimedes Rodil, who dressed up as the God of Fortune, said he could see the joy and hope in the eyes of the seniors as he peeped through the small holes in the costume. PHOTO: LIANHE ZHAOBAO

ceived a surprise too.

The senior citizens prepared a special lohei and put up a short performance of Chinese New Year songs.

Ms Chin Soo Fang, head of corporate communications and corporate social responsibility division at SPH, said: “We had not expected the senior citizens to make the time

and effort to reciprocate and show their appreciation with their lohei and performance.

“They have touched our hearts, just as we have warmed theirs.”

Care Corner Singapore is a non-profit organisation established in 1981. It has 33 service centres island-wide reaching out to the isolated and disadvantaged through their exten-

sive social services. Target groups include youth at risk, lonely seniors and children with special needs.

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Mr Kenneth Tan has committed gang-related crimes such as drug peddling, loan sharking and selling bootleg VCDs. At 15, he chopped off a rival gang member's left hand with a parang during a fight. When he was 19, he was sentenced to three years' jail and three strokes of the cane. Now 32 and a father of two daughters, he is an entrepreneur who is active in church and a mentor to troubled youth.

ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

GENERATION GRIT

Know of a Singaporean aged 35 or below who has shown grit amid life's adversities? E-mail us at stnewsdesk@sph.com.sg



GenerationGrit

Gangster turned youth mentor

Once a hardcore gangster involved in drug peddling and loan sharking, Kenneth Tan was always spoiling for a fight. But the 32-year-old has turned his life around – he runs two firms and mentors troubled youth. This is part of a series on resilient millennials who overcame adversity – and their troubled past – to make a life for themselves.

Theresa Tan
Senior Social Affairs Correspondent

Name any crime associated with gangs, and, chances are, Mr Kenneth Tan would have committed it. Drug peddling, doing the dirty work for loan sharks, selling bootleg VCDs and fighting were all in a day's work.

The only crime he shied away from was pimping. "I'm scared of karma. I'm scared that my daughters would be pimped by others when they grow up," said Mr Tan, now 32 and a father of two daughters.

From a gangster who chopped off a rival gang member's hand during a fight at age 15, Mr Tan is today an entrepreneur who is active in church and a mentor to troubled youth.

So what changed his life? "I don't want to spend my life in jail. And I don't want to die like my headman," he said of his gang leader who was stabbed to death in what appeared to be a revenge attack. "And after finding God, He changed me to be a better person, and my temper went down to almost zero."

The roots of his rage and rebellion started early in life. Mr Tan never knew his biological father. His mother gave birth to him when she was just 15, and her shotgun marriage broke up shortly after he was born.

She later married a contractor and the couple had two other sons.

Mr Tan said his stepfather was

At Zhonghua Secondary, the Normal (Technical) student was a terror and always spoiling for a fight.

Mr Tan, who has multiple tattoos and sports a goatee, said: "My headman said I must intimidate others to show I'm the king there."

At 13, he started sniffing glue and taking codeine to get high. He also started peddling illegal VCDs. At 14, he moved on to consuming drugs like Ice and Ketamine. At 15, he became a runner for the gang, carrying out tasks such as selling drugs and locking debtors in their flats.

That year, he chopped off a rival gang member's left hand with a parang during a fight. Mr Tan was caught by the police and sent to the Singapore Boys' Home for three years. It was his second stint – he was sent there for a few months when he was 13 for rioting.

He spent his time at the home studying and scored six points for five subjects at the N levels.

But after he was released, he went back to his old ways. He became more involved in drug peddling and had a network of runners under him. In a week, he could make a profit of more than \$10,000 from the drug sales.

"I used the money to buy more drugs and to enjoy life. From head to toe, everything I wore was branded," he said.

When he was 19, he was caught and faced a jail term of up to 20 years for his offences. But he was given a three-year sentence and three strokes of the cane – which he saw as a miracle. About a year later, his gang leader died, dealing him a big blow. He started to reflect and decided to cut off all ties with the gang after his release and pursue a career in art and design.

He studied for an advanced diploma in graphic design at a private school while working as a final artwork artist and later as a junior designer. To his surprise, he won a few design awards, which boosted his confidence. And his career took off – he worked as an art or design direc-

short-tempered, quick to lay hands on him and they had a strained relationship in his growing-up years.

At 11, the Junyuan Primary pupil joined a gang, thinking it was cool to do so and no one would bully him.

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Turning over a new leaf



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tor in various firms and he earned more than \$10,000 a month then.

Life was good – until 2016 when the newly married Mr Tan met with three accidents. The first was a car accident that resulted in him suffering whiplash. A few months later, he fell down the stairs and broke his collarbone. The last accident saw him falling off his e-scooter and suffering a concussion.

To add to his woes, his stepfather used his name to borrow money and he had to help him repay about \$200,000 at short notice. Mr Tan had other debts and the total came up to almost \$400,000. To pay his debts, he sold his two cars, stocks and two condominium units, one here and the other in Malaysia.

It was the lowest point in his life.

"I lost everything and I was suicidal," he said. His wife, a bank executive, was then pregnant with their first child. "My wife woke me up (from my suicidal thoughts). She said if I died, I wouldn't be able to see my unborn daughter." His elder daughter is now two years old and his younger girl is three months old.

Mr Tan pulled himself together and started creative agency We Pee Rainbow with a partner. They came up with the cheeky name, saying "we are so creative that even our pee is rainbow". The firm is doing well and now has eight staff, including himself. He also runs interior design firm Jimeric Interior.

He said his relationship with his stepfather has improved over the past few years as the older man has mellowed and become more loving.

Now, Mr Tan volunteers as a mentor at Architects of Life, a social enterprise that helps youth and former offenders, by sharing his life story with delinquent youth.

He recounted how about a decade ago, he ran into a man whom he had slashed during a gang fight. The fight left the man with a big scar across his face. Mr Tan apologised for what he had done and offered to let the man hit him.

The man did not do so. Instead, he said the slashing gave him the impetus to turn over a new leaf. He had left the gang and was studying for a degree when he ran into Mr Tan.

Said Mr Tan: "There is no such thing as you cannot change, as long as you try. I was very bad and I managed to change. I want to be a mentor for troubled youth as I know there's still hope for them."

theresat@sph.com.sg

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Check for 3-year-old cars a waste of money

Recently, I completed my vehicle assessment inspection required by the Land Transport Authority (LTA) for vehicles three years and older. This requirement for cars in Singapore has been in force for many years.

However, I wonder if it is a waste of money and resources to impose this requirement when a car is only three years old.

Singapore is already one of the

most expensive places in the world to own a car, and most car owners treat their cars very carefully.

Many new cars also come with a three- or five-year warranty, so the maintenance of the vehicle is taken care of. With technological advances, most cars are often trouble-free for the first five years.

Singapore has excellent roads and the cars here are subjected to much less road abuse. As the use of

cars is restricted here, especially with the car-lite movement and our excellent public transport system, many people use their cars only on an as-needed basis.

I wonder how many three-year-old cars have failed the inspection in the past decade.

The authorities should consider making these inspections compulsory only after five years.

Koh Bock Swi

Keep CPF schemes simple

In a recent article, Invest editor Lorna Tan provided a whole broad range of information regarding the various Central Provident Fund schemes (Revisit your CPF options to get the best out of them; Jan 27).

The details of the schemes are confusing and tough to

comprehend. I may even have to engage a financial consultant just to understand the details of the various CPF schemes.

I would never have imagined that a simple system started more than half a century ago could become so complex.

When there are mixed objectives, the outcomes can be perplexing for ordinary folks.

I urge the authorities to keep it simple.

Parsimony is the key to effective public administration.

Thomas Lee Hock Seng (Dr)

Gojek has been a let-down

The recent arrival of Gojek was widely anticipated to bring in some much-needed competition to the private-hire scene, especially after Uber's exit 10 months ago.

However, in my personal experience, Gojek's arrival here has been something of an operations and public relations failure.

In the span of 10 days, I experienced the following:

- Low volume of cars on the ride-hailing platform, so it is difficult to obtain a ride.
- Drivers accepting a booking

when they are much too far away. I noticed that the drivers were 15 to 20 minutes away but I could not cancel the rides because of the cancellation fee.

- Conversely, drivers have cancelled on me at least five or six times. They accepted a booking, but about 10 minutes later cancelled it for no apparent reason and did not respond to calls.

Two weeks ago, a driver accepted my booking but did not show up. Then instead of cancelling the ride,

he pressed the "ride completed" button and I was charged for the full ride.

Gojek has still failed to reimburse me even though it was obvious that it was a fake ride as the duration of the ride from Novena to Sentosa was recorded as four minutes.

It appears Gojek has bitten off more than it can chew by trying to simultaneously expand across South-east Asia.

I await a response and a refund from the Gojek team.

Andrew Wetton

Questionable requests for donations

The number of representatives from unrecognised charity organisations stationed near temples, MRT stations, shopping malls and in crowded neighbourhood areas is surprising.

These people flash their certificates, pictures and tickets and resort to pushy tactics to try and get members of the public to donate to charities that help old folk and the needy.

Often, they claim the money is going into the purchase of rice for such people.

Sometimes, the donations start from \$50 and rise by increments of \$50.

These representatives range

from teenagers to old folk.

Are they part-timers, full-timers or volunteers?

One night, a man of about 50 years of age came knocking on my door asking for donations.

He showed me his certificate and tickets for purchase, which I kindly rejected. He became angry.

What are the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and police doing to prevent any unauthorised or illegal solicitation of money by scammers under the guise of charity?

This is going to damage the image of Singapore if it is allowed to go on.

Gabriel Ong

Number of complaints on lift spare parts has dropped since CCCS probe

We thank Mr Ronnie Lim Ah Bee for his views in his letter (Do more to prevent anti-competitive acts; Jan 21).

Town councils can choose to appoint the original lift company or engage a third-party to maintain the Housing Board lifts in their estate.

If lift companies refuse to provide essential lift spare parts and their actions prevent third-party contractors from competing for lift maintenance contracts in HDB estates, then these lift companies may be in breach of the Competition Act for abuse of a dominant position.

The Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore (CCCS) is investigating a number of lift companies which have allegedly refused to supply lift spare parts for maintenance in HDB estates since 2016.

The companies under investigation can offer voluntary commitments which are legal undertakings to supply lift parts to address competition concerns.

To date, we have accepted such

voluntary commitments from three lift companies and this is deemed sufficient to address our concerns.

CCCS is seeking public feedback on the commitments offered by two other lift companies.

Since the start of CCCS' investigation, the number of complaints about the inability to secure lift spare parts has fallen.

As for the inability to obtain car parts in the motor industry, which Mr Lim also touched on in his letter, CCCS' checks has revealed this not to be the case.

Car parts distributors and car workshops are generally able to obtain parts from a large number of suppliers in Singapore and abroad.

To this end, CCCS has followed up with Mr Lim on this aspect of his feedback.

CCCS will continue to detect anti-competitive conduct and, where appropriate, mete out necessary directions, including financial penalty.

Herbert Fung
Director (Business and Economics)
Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore

Singtel staff explained offers in detail

We refer to Mr Kwek Joo Kwang's letter (Unethical sales tactics used on elderly; Jan 18).

We would like to clarify as follows:

We contacted Mr Kwek in late December, prior to his Forum letter, to address his concerns about his father-in-law's new Singtel TV contract.

A technician was sent to his home to swap out his DVR set-top box, without charge.

We also reviewed our series of telephone conversations with his father-in-law.

Our staff member who spoke to him introduced a range of promotions that had short or no contract periods, giving customers flexibility and the opportunity to discover new content.

She discussed the offers in detail and explained the new charges that would apply. She also reminded him of the promotion's end date and that he could cancel at any time, without penalty, after the six-month promotion period. He acknowledged the terms and conditions of the offer.

We have assured Mr Kwek that we have strict policies to ensure that our staff present our offers and packages clearly so that customers can make fully informed decisions.

Candy Chua (Ms)
Vice-President, Consumer Operations
Consumer Singapore
Singtel

WRITE IN: Letters should be meant for exclusive publication in The Straits Times. They should be no longer than 400 words and must include the writer's full name, address and phone numbers. The Forum editor reserves the right to edit the letters. For women, please indicate Miss, Ms, Mrs or Madam. Please e-mail your letter to stforum@sph.com.sg. Readers can also respond to letters via Facebook and Twitter.

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ST's first augmented reality project showcases artefacts of Asian deities on display at Singapore's Asian Civilisations Museum.

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The project, told through words, photos and videos, documents the last days of a cancer patient and the volunteers who accompanied him to the end.

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ST content and news articles are curated in an app and online portal for students to learn about current affairs, and for educators to create teaching guides.

BEST READER REVENUE INITIATIVE (BRONZE)
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The interactive game was part of ST's coverage of the Budget this year. It invites users to pick a character and navigate their financial decisions.

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ST PHOTO: ARTHUR LEE

Lions in the city

The Chingay parade went downtown on Feb 24, 1985, with this lion dance performance. Some spectators, eager to get the best views, went as early as 6am to the Orchard and Scotts crossroads, where the show began.

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Among the six brands with cars mostly in the above-\$750,000 price range, three posted higher sales here, according to latest figures from the Land Transport Authority. ST PHOTO: CAROLINE CHIA

Sales of high-end cars soar, but sink for general market

New models of super-luxury cars boost take-up; mass market brands hit by smaller COE supply

Christopher Tan
Senior Transport
Correspondent

High-end car sales soared to greater heights last year even as the general market slumped on the back of fewer certificates of entitlement (COEs).

Among the six brands with cars mostly in the above-\$750,000 price range, three posted higher sales here, according to latest figures from the Land Transport Authority.

McLaren and Lamborghini saw sales more than double last year, while Rolls-Royce Motor Cars chalked up a 24 per cent increase.

Ms Ong Lay Ling, group managing director of multi-franchise motor firm Eurokars, said: "We did well with McLaren because we had a full-year delivery of the new 720S. We will continue to do well this year with the arrival of the 600LT.

"For Rolls-Royce, we had a very positive response to the new Phantom. Likewise, we expect to continue this trend with the Cullinan."

The Cullinan is Rolls-Royce's first sport utility vehicle (SUV).

Lamborghini was the best-selling sports car brand, with 38 units sold. Its growth last year was partly on the back of its Urus SUV, of which 13 units were sold. Arch rival Ferrari, which does not have an SUV yet, was one car behind at 37 units.

Mr Melvin Goh, chief executive of Lamborghini dealer EuroSports Global, said: "It has been a fantastic

year for Lamborghini Singapore, especially with the relocation of our showroom to Leng Kee Road and the launch of our first SUV, which has received numerous positive reviews from the media and customers."

In this segment, Bentley was the top-selling brand, although sales fell from 70 units in 2017 to 61 last year.

In total, the six high-end brands accounted for 216 cars sold – 13.1 per cent more than in 2017.

In contrast, the general market shrank because of a smaller supply of COEs – a function of fewer vehicles being taken off the road. COE supply is determined every three months, with each quota hinging on the number of vehicles deregistered in the preceding three months.

Honda pipped long-established front runner Toyota to secure pole position with 15,040 cars sold, 6.1 per cent fewer than in 2017. Toyota delivered 13,817 cars, 27.8 per cent fewer than in the previous year.

These numbers, however, include a sizeable percentage of parallel imports – cars that are sourced from overseas dealers instead of directly from car manufacturers.

Excluding parallel imports, Honda agent Kah Motor said its sales improved from 2017, but would not reveal figures.

Mercedes-Benz, which also has a parallel import segment, was third. Its sales shrank by 10.7 per cent to 7,122 units.

Hyundai's sales rose by more than 70 per cent to reach 6,540 units, making it the fourth best-seller last

The moneyed and the masses

Super-luxury car sales

	2018	2017	% change
Bentley	61	70	-14.8
Lamborghini	38	18	+111.1
Ferrari	37	39	-5.1
Rolls-Royce	31	25	+24
Aston Martin	26	29	-10.3
McLaren	23	10	+130
Total	216	191	+13.1

Top 10 best-selling brands

	2018	2017	% change
Honda	15,040	16,013	-6.1
Toyota	13,817	19,133	-27.8
Mercedes-Benz	7,122	7,976	-10.7
Hyundai	6,540	3,804	+71.9
Mazda	5,414	8,509	-36.4
BMW	5,405	5,591	-3.3
Nissan	4,019	5,241	-23.3
Kia	3,923	3,848	+1.9
Mitsubishi	3,284	3,555	-7.6
Subaru	3,196	3,239	-1.3
Total (including all other brands)	80,281	91,922	-12.7

Source: LTA STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

year, and the brand with the biggest sales improvement of the lot.

Mr Teo Hock Seng, managing director of Hyundai agent Komoco, said its performance was all the more significant because "unlike many other brands, Hyundai does not have any parallel import".

Mazda was fifth, but sales fell by 36.4 per cent to 5,414 units. This was largely because demand from Lion City Rentals had dried up with the exit of its owner Uber.

On the whole, the passenger car market shrank by 12.7 per cent to 80,281 units. Most of the top 10 best-selling brands outperformed the market.

Nanyang Business School adjunct associate professor Zafar Momin said: "Compared to 2017, Japanese carmakers fared poorly in 2018. Toyota, in particular, had a reduction of 5,316 units in sales, while Hyundai notched up a gain of 2,736 units.

"In the mass market car segment, consumers are not particularly brand loyal and choose cars that offer them the best value for money.

"Consequently, the leadership of the segment can switch hands quite easily if a carmaker offers a model with a compelling value proposition like Hyundai Avante currently, or Toyota Altis, Honda Vezel in earlier years."

Prof Momin added: "The number of super-luxury cars on Singapore roads has been rising steadily for the past decade. Since 2008, their car population has risen impressively by four times in the case of Bentley, and two to three times in the case of Lamborghini, Ferrari, Aston Martin and McLaren.

"Given that Singapore's ultra-wealthy population – those with net assets exceeding US\$50 million (S\$67.6 million) – ranks among the top tier in the world, and it is home to thousands of just plain super-wealthy individuals, it should be no surprise that the sales of super-luxury cars would increase over time, just like other items such as real estate, art, yachts and private jets."

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Mortgage demand flags in Dec on property curbs

Grace Leong
Business Correspondent

Mortgage demand is flagging as private home buyers turned cautious in the wake of the July 6 cooling measures, tighter financing requirements and higher financing costs in a rising interest rate environment.

A study by Credit Bureau Singapore (CBS) found new mortgage loan applications plunged 64.9 per cent to 4,423 in December from July last year, and were down 54 per cent from a year ago.

According to data provided by CBS, the number of new loan applications was at 12,619 in July, and 8,100 in August.

"With the drop in mortgage loan applications, we note that the measures put in place have exhibited seasonal fluctuations in the housing market and slower take-up rates for new launches," a CBS spokesman said.

Analysts cited slowing developers' sales of new homes, excluding executive condominiums, with the latest Urban Redevelopment Authority data showing a 16.8 per cent drop from 2017 to 8,795 last year – the worst drop since a 6.3 per cent fall in 2012 after the first round of Additional Buyer's Stamp Duty or ABSD.

Cooling measures that took effect on July 6 last year saw the ABSD raised and loan-to-value limits tightened.

The ABSD rates for Singaporeans and permanent residents purchasing their second and subsequent residential properties were raised by 5 percentage points for all individuals and 10 percentage points for entities.

Loan-to-value limits were tightened by 5 percentage points for all housing loans granted by financial institutions.

"The current en bloc cycle has not translated to additional new home sales. It isn't unusual because the overall market conditions are not as favourable due to the loan restrictions, cooling measures and weak rentals," said International Property Advisor chief executive Ku Swee Yong.

"Deleveraging is good especially in the light of growing uncertainty and risks in the face of the upcoming Indonesian and Thai elections, Brexit and the ongoing trade war," he added.

Ms Ong Choon Fah of Edmund Tie & Company said, "After the Chinese New Year holidays, there will be more launches and there should be a pick-up in buying."

The CBS study also showed that 60,746 buyers held more than one mortgage loan in November last year.

This represents a 4.5 per cent drop from 63,585 buyers in July last year, and a 6.1 per cent decrease from 64,680 buyers in November 2017.

gleong@sph.com.sg

64.9%

Percentage fall in new mortgage loan applications in December from July last year, according to a study by Credit Bureau Singapore.

Two residential sites up for collective sale again

Two sites, Gilstead Court and Lakeside Apartments, are back on the market for sale en bloc, likely with lower reserve prices amid the cooling collective sale fever.

Freehold Gilstead Court in the Novena-Newton enclave has been relaunched for sale by tender, and its collective sale committee has proposed to lower the reserve price from \$168 million to \$153 million.

Its marketing agent JLL yesterday said the move comes after the July 6 cooling measures last year, as well as the Urban Redevelopment Authority's revised maximum allowable dwelling units in non-landed residential developments.

The almost 9 per cent price cut was approved by those present at an extraordinary general meeting, and owners supportive of lowering the reserve price have begun signing a supplemental agreement.

Nonetheless, for the change to take effect, the legal process requires approval from owners representing at least 80 per cent by total share value and by total floor area. As of yesterday, owners representing more than 60 per cent have approved the lower reserve price, JLL said.

The original reserve price of \$168 million translates to a land rate of about \$1,590 per sq ft per plot ratio (psf ppr), or about \$1,486 psf ppr after factoring in the 7 per cent bonus balcony plot ratio.

However, based on the lower proposed reserve price of \$153 million, the unit land rate will be reduced to \$1,448 psf ppr, or \$1,353 psf ppr with the 7 per cent bonus balcony plot ratio. No development charge is payable for the 75,479 sq ft site, which has a gross plot ratio of 1.4.

The tender for Gilstead Court

closes at 2.30pm on Feb 27.

Meanwhile, the 99-year leasehold Lakeside Apartments in Yuan Ching Road relaunches for collective sale by public tender today, with its reserve price possibly being lowered to \$205 million from \$240 million.

The effort to garner fresh 80 per cent support from owners is still ongoing, with the current support level at 70 per cent, said marketing agent SLP International.

With the new reserve price, the land rate would be about \$939 psf ppr after taking into account the lease extension premium, differential premium, possible bonus balcony and the 5 per cent additional buyer's stamp duty introduced last July.

The land size is 12,465 sq m and there are 120 units with the same built-in size. The tender will close on Feb 27 at 3pm.



Freehold Gilstead Court has been relaunched for sale by tender at \$153 million, about 9 per cent lower than its previous \$168 million reserve price. ST FILE PHOTO

Fintech firms raised record \$53.5b in 2018: Study

120% surge due largely to 52 mega rounds; Asia sees biggest jump in investment deals

NEW YORK • Venture capital-backed financial technology firms raised a record US\$39.57 billion (S\$53.5 billion) from investors globally last year, up 120 per cent from the previous year, according to re-

search by data provider CB Insights published yesterday.

Funding was raised through 1,707 deals, up from 1,480 in 2017, the research said. The surge in funding was due in large part to 52 mega

rounds, or investments larger than US\$100 million, which were worth US\$24.88 billion combined, according to the research.

A US\$14 billion investment in Ant Financial – the payment affiliate of Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba Group Holding – alone accounted for 35 per cent of total fintech funding last year, the research said.

In the last three months of last

year, five companies joined the coveted ranks of fintech “unicorns”, or companies valued at over US\$1 billion each. These include credit card provider Brex, digital bank Monzo and data aggregator Plaid.

Venture capital investors have been pouring billions of dollars into fintech companies in the hope that they can gain market share from incumbent financial institutions by

offering easier-to-use and cheaper digital financial services.

Fintechs have emerged globally across all sectors of finance, including lending, banking and wealth management.

While the large rounds minted new unicorns and led funding to hit a record high last year, CB Insights estimates that these will likely delay initial public offerings (IPOs). “IPO activity is likely to remain lacklustre in 2019,” the research reads.

Asia saw the biggest jump in number of deals last year, growing 38 per cent from the previous year and accounting for a record US\$22.65 billion, according to the study.

In the United States, fintechs raised a record US\$11.89 billion through 659 investments, while the number of deals dropped in Europe, but funding reached a record US\$3.53 billion. REUTERS

Cyber attack may cost world economy \$261b: Report

Sue-Ann Tan

A major cyber attack with demands for ransom from victims could cost US\$193 billion (S\$261 billion) and affect more than 600,000 businesses worldwide.

The warning comes in a new report from the Cyber Risk Management project, a Singapore-based initiative by organisations from the public and private sectors.

It studied a hypothetical attack launched through an e-mail infected with a ransomware virus that is forwarded to all of a person's contacts. Within 24 hours, it encrypts all data on 30 million devices worldwide. Companies of all sizes would be forced to pay a ransom to decrypt their data or to replace infected devices.

“This report shows the increasing risk to businesses from cyber attacks as the global economy becomes more interconnected and reliant on technology. The reality for business is, it's not if you get attacked but when,” said Dr Trevor Maynard, head of innovation at insurer Lloyd's, one of the founding members of the project.

“Other costs accrue as the scenario unfolds, including cyber-incident response, damage control and mitigation, business interruption, lost revenue and reduced productivity,” the report noted.

The United States would be the hardest hit with US\$89 billion at risk. Europe could lose US\$76 billion, and Asia, US\$19 billion. The rest of the world could lose US\$9 billion.

The report noted: “The (Asian) region is less affected than the US and Europe due to a lower presence of sectors with high vulnerability scores.”

A ransomware attack would largely affect Asian healthcare, transport and manufacturing sectors, it added.

“Countries such as China, which has the second-largest share of total intermediary goods exported in the world, are particularly impacted in the scenario. The disruption to transportation links compounds the economic loss in the manufacturing sector as stocks of final and intermediary goods already produced are forced to remain in storage,” the report said.

“Healthcare is one of the most impacted sectors globally and this resonates in Singapore,” noted Lloyd's Asia chief executive Angela Kelly.

“Recent high-profile cyber incidents in the country have illustrated just how vulnerable this critical sector is to cyberthreats and highlights the issues facing the sector in managing legacy IT systems, scarce resources and underdeveloped security infrastructure.”

The Cyber Risk Management project is led by Nanyang Technological University's Insurance Risk and Finance Research Centre in collaboration with industry partners and academic experts, including the University of Cambridge Centre for Risk Studies. Industry founding members include Lloyd's and fellow insurer MSIG.

Dr Andrew Coburn, chief scientist at the Cambridge Centre for Risk Studies, said: “The scenario... highlights the potential for loss that can occur from contagious malware attacks.

“It challenges assumptions about cyber preparedness and the adequacy of security measures that companies have in place.

“We hope (it) will help improve the understanding of cyber-risk and lead to better resilience to attacks like these in the future.”

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Singapore remains most liveable city for Asian expats

Singapore is the most liveable city for Asian expats for the 14th year in a row, according to a new survey.

Several factors were cited in the Republic's enduring appeal.

These include “access to great facilities, a low crime rate, good quality healthcare and education, as well as a large expat population already living here”, said Mr Lee Quane, Asia regional director for

ECA International, the human resources consultancy that compiles the annual league table.

“Although many cities in Asia offer similar benefits to overseas workers, Singapore remains the top location, and it does not look like it will drop in the rankings any time soon,” he added.

But great rival Hong Kong is on the slide, falling 12 places to joint

41st, after the disruption from Typhoon Mangkhut last September, which caused an estimated US\$1 billion (S\$1.35 billion) in damage.

Hong Kong has been falling since its peak ranking of 11th in 2013: air pollution sent it down to 29th place in 2017 and 28th in 2016.

In contrast, Chinese cities like Beijing, Nanjing and Xiamen have been rising in the liveability rank-

ings on rapid improvements to infrastructure, despite excessive levels of air pollution.

The Chinese authorities in recent years have introduced measures to combat air pollution, which have translated into improvements in their rankings.

Most Malaysian and Thai cities also rose in the rankings. Bangkok was the highest-rated Thai centre at 89th place, while George Town moved to 97th and Kuala Lumpur climbed to 98th.

Outside of Asia, cities in Australia and New Zealand offered the best quality of living for Asian workers, with Brisbane and Sydney joint second in the rankings.

STILL TOP LOCATION

Although many cities in Asia offer similar benefits to overseas workers, Singapore remains the top location, and it does not look like it will drop in the rankings any time soon.



MR LEE QUANE, Asia regional director for ECA International.

The central business district of Sydney. Australia's business conditions index – measuring hiring, sales and profits – slipped to two last month from 11 a month earlier, a National Australia Bank report showed yesterday. The result dovetails with slower economic growth in the third quarter as falling property prices threaten to dampen the Australian economy. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Australia firms face worst slump in conditions since 2008

SYDNEY • Australian firms suffered the worst slump in conditions since the 2008 global financial crisis as evidence mounts that the economy slowed in the latter part of last year.

The business conditions index – measuring hiring, sales and profits – dropped to two last month from 11 a month earlier, a National Australia Bank (NAB) report showed

yesterday. A gauge of employment fell to four from nine in November, while profitability plunged to zero from eight. A separate confidence index was unchanged at three.

NAB chief economist Alan Oster said the drop had been “broad-based” across all states and industries outside of mining.

“These declines taken at face value suggest a significant slowing in business activity,” he added. “There could be some implications for the labour market and business capital expenditure.”

The Australian dollar fell after the report, buying 71.47 US cents at 12.10pm in Sydney compared with 71.57 before its release.

The result dovetails with slower economic growth in the third quarter as falling property prices threaten to throw a wet blanket over the Australian economy.

Money markets are growing nervous and traders are pricing in about a 70 per cent chance of an interest rate cut by the year end – despite the central bank saying it expects the next move to be an increase.

“Interpreting data around the holiday period can be difficult,” Mr Os-

ter said. “With confidence remaining below average and forward orders having also declined, our expectation is that, at the very least, a significant portion of the decline in business conditions will persist.”

While Australia's wage growth has been anaemic in the past five years, hiring has accelerated since 2017 and consumption held up as households opted to save less.

The concern now is that consumers will hunker down in response to declining property prices, known as the wealth effect, which could hit already struggling retailers hard.

Australia's central bank has kept rates at a record-low 1.5 per cent since 2016 as it tries to spur hiring and tighten the labour market to encourage faster wage growth. It has had some success, with unemployment falling to 5 per cent.

Policymakers will hold their first meeting for the year on Feb 5. BLOOMBERG

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China weakness spreads far and wide

Forecasts for tech, industrials and car sectors muted, but retail remains bright

WILMINGTON • Caterpillar manufactures huge yellow bulldozers. Nvidia makes minuscule computer chips. Their products have little in common, but their earnings on Monday pointed to the same direction: demand in China is slowing down for a widening array of goods.

Since Apple shook investors early this month with a warning, a picture is starting to emerge of where the cooling in the world's second-largest economy will hurt in the coming year. It includes Stanley Black & Decker's tools, PPG Industries' automotive coatings, Intel's processors and Trinseo's synthetic rubber tyres.

Here's a rundown of the recent developments of United States and European businesses so far.

INDUSTRIALS

Caterpillar, an industrial bellwether, sent a gloomy signal on Monday when it posted its biggest quarterly profit shortfall in a decade, and provided a 2019 forecast that trailed some of Wall Street's estimates. Sales of excavators will be flat year over year in China, the company said.

Shares of Japanese rivals Komatsu and Hitachi Construction Machinery each lost more than 4 per cent in Tokyo. In China, Sany Heavy Industry and other heavy equipment makers fell at the open.

Stanley Black & Decker chief executive Jim Lorie was not shy about raising the alarm bells on China last week, saying the firm was facing slowing economic growth there, along with most of the rest of the world.

The previous week, paint maker PPG talked about "sluggish industrial activity in China" among pressures that it will face in the first half of this year.

TECHNOLOGY

Intel, whose processors are the main component in most of the world's personal computers and servers, cited softness in China among the reasons for its lower-than-expected annual forecast last week.

Nvidia, the biggest maker of chips for computer graphics cards, echoed those comments on Monday, saying "deteriorating macro-economic conditions, particularly in China, impacted consumer demand" for its products.

In Japan, chip-equipment manufacturer Tokyo Electron dropped as much as 2.9 per cent, while Advantest slid 6 per cent. Samsung Electronics fell 1.1 per cent in Seoul, while Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing declined 2 per cent.

CARS

Car sales in China fell last year for the first time in more than 20 years. "China is under threat, for sure,"



INDUSTRIALS

Caterpillar posted its biggest quarterly profit shortfall in a decade. PHOTOS: REUTERS



CARS

Ford Motor posted a fourth-quarter loss of US\$534 million (S\$722 million) in China last quarter.

Volkswagen chief executive Herbert Diess said in a Bloomberg TV interview in Davos last week. "This year will be challenging."

Ford Motor posted a fourth-quarter loss of US\$534 million (S\$722 million) in China last quarter.

Wholesales by the carmaker's China joint ventures – a measure of how many vehicles are shipped to dealers – plunged 57 per cent during the period. By the end of last year, only about a third of the company's dealers were profitable, Mr Jim Farley, Ford's president of global markets, said on Jan 23.

US auto-parts supplier Lear offered more colour on China last Friday. Lear, whose biggest customer is Ford, said it expected orders for parts, like seating systems, to fall more than 10 per cent this year.

"They confirmed auto weakness in China," Mr Douglas Rothacker, an analyst for Bloomberg Intelligence, said. "Lear offers a good read across the industry for expectations in 2019."

Continental, Europe's second-largest car-parts maker, warned earlier this month that Chinese auto production might stagnate at best this year, leading to a muted earnings forecast for 2019.

BRIGHT SPOT: RETAIL

So far, luxury and consumer goods have been spared. Jeweller Tiffany & Co enjoyed strong growth in China in the final two months of the year.

"The holiday period has actually been very positive – China is a big

area of focus," Tiffany chief executive Alessandro Bogliolo said on Jan 18. He added that a boost in marketing spending there about a year ago has started to pay off. "We have seen an acceleration in mainland China."

Starbucks is opening a new store every 15 hours in the country.

Executives at consumer giant Procter & Gamble said last week that they have not seen any sign of a slowdown in the country, although "things in China can

change quickly".

Investors will scrutinise the financial results of luxury giant LVMH Moet Hennessy Louis Vuitton, due yesterday, for any hint of the outlook for luxury in the country. BLOOMBERG



TECHNOLOGY

Intel cited softness in China among the reasons for its lower-than-expected annual forecast last week.



RETAIL

Starbucks is opening a new store every 15 hours in China, in a sign that retail remains a bright spot in the country.

Young Asian heiresses being groomed for family business empires

HONG KONG • Asia's billionaire family boardrooms are making way for heiresses.

Ms Michelle Li, the 23-year-old granddaughter of Mr Li Ka Shing, Hong Kong's richest person, has joined him, her father and uncle on the board of Chesterfield Realty, a family-controlled unit of CK Hutchison Holdings, according to the Hong Kong Company Registry.

She is among third-generation women being groomed for leadership at conglomerates created by some of Hong Kong's wealthiest patriarchs. While her father, Mr Victor Li, took the reins last year from Mr Li Ka Shing, 90, as chairman of the group's flagship companies, her appointment shows that succession planning is already under way for a generation from now.

Harvard University graduate Sonia Cheng runs the Rosewood Hotels arm of New World Development, founded by her grandfather, Mr Cheng Yu Tung.

Ms Kristine Li, the eldest granddaughter of property tycoon Lee Shau Kee, studied at Stanford University and is a deputy general manager at Henderson Land Development.

"These women have a lot to con-

tribute and could become good role models if they take up leadership," said University of Hong Kong Professor Petula Ho. "But this is very class-biased and they come from really rich families. For others, the glass ceiling is very true. Hong Kong is still a man's world."

In China, where fortunes were created more recently, control is only now starting to be handed to the second generation, many of them women.

Ms Yang Huiyan, co-chairman of Country Garden Holdings, was only 23 in 2005 when she inherited her father's stake in the real estate developer. The Ohio State University graduate is now worth US\$19.2 billion (S\$26 billion) and is China's richest woman, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, a ranking of the world's 500 wealthiest people.

Ms Theresa Tse, a University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business graduate, was 22 in 2015 when she became chairman of her father's Sino Biopharmaceuticals. Her stake is worth US\$1.1 billion.

Ms Perenna Kei, 28, joined the board of Logan Property Holdings, the company founded by her father, Mr Kei Hoi Pang, in 2010. BLOOMBERG

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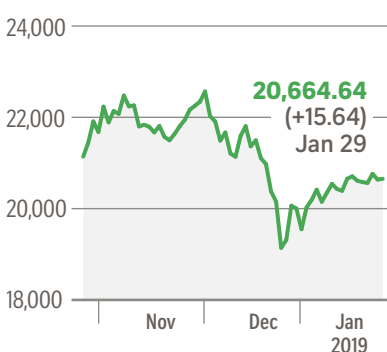
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BullsAndBears

Bleak earnings, trade tensions weigh on STI

Biggest losers include financial heavyweights and most tech firms

Lynette Tan

Disappointing corporate earnings and renewed trade tensions left investors on edge from the word go yesterday.

The benchmark Straits Times Index (STI) opened in the red and remained depressed throughout the day, shedding 11.81 points, or 0.37 per cent, to 3,187.69.

Losers outnumbered gainers 241 to 135 after 1.72 billion shares worth \$1.15 billion changed hands.

Financial heavyweights did the STI no favours: United Overseas Bank shed 1.16 per cent to \$25.53; OCBC Bank declined 1.04 per cent to \$11.40; and Great Eastern sank 1.05 per cent to \$26.42.

Most local technology stocks were swayed by lacklustre earnings from their United States counterparts and also pointed lower.

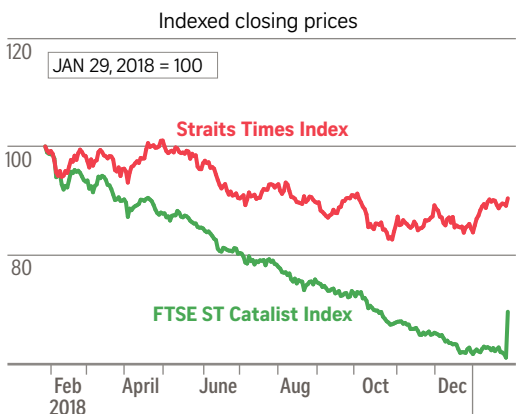
AEM Holdings lost 0.55 per cent to 90.5 cents while Creative Technology, buoyed earlier this month by hype over the Las Vegas launch of its Super X-Fi headphones, gave up gains too, declining 0.92 per cent to \$5.38.

Meanwhile, Venture Corp fell as much as 1.3 per cent during the day, but regained its footing later to end trading up 0.25 per cent at \$15.93.

Maybank Kim Eng said earlier this month that Venture was the

Straits Times Index

Jan 29, 2019
3,187.69 ↓
-11.81 (-0.37%)
Current streak
2 days
Day high
3,196.09
Day low
3,176.13
52-week high
3,615.28 (May 2, 2018)
52-week low
2,966.45 (Oct 30, 2018)

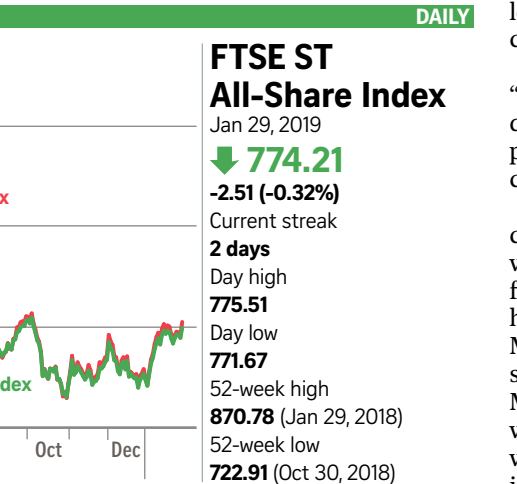


FTSE ST Catalyst Index

Jan 29, 2019
300.51 ↓
-3.32 (-1.09%)
Current streak
4 days
Day high
304.40
Day low
300.30
52-week high
490.47 (Jan 29, 2018)
52-week low
300.51 (Jan 29, 2019)

FTSE ST All-Share Index

Jan 29, 2019
774.21 ↓
-2.51 (-0.32%)
Current streak
2 days
Day high
775.51
Day low
771.67
52-week high
870.78 (Jan 29, 2018)
52-week low
722.91 (Oct 30, 2018)



safest bet amid volatility in the tech sector. Analyst Lai Gene Lih noted that its fundamentals remain intact with the company being a potential beneficiary of the US-China trade war, given its sizeable production out of Singapore and Malaysia.

The disappointment came as US

giants Caterpillar and Nvidia issued bleak earnings guidance on Monday. Both blamed deteriorating demand from China as the main reason for their earnings downgrade.

Caterpillar, considered a bellwether for global trade, given its exposure to overseas markets, cited

lower demand in China for sales declines in the Asia-Pacific.

Likewise, chipmaker Nvidia said “deteriorating macroeconomic conditions, particularly in China”, impacted demand for its graphics processing units.

“When you see the big cyclical companies missing earnings... it worries the market because it confirms what they have already been hearing from the macro side,” said Mr Dave Lafferty, chief market strategist at Natixis Investment Managers. “Everyone knows the world is decelerating, they are just waiting to see if the corporate earnings confirm that.”

Mr Eli Lee, head of investment strategy at Bank of Singapore, is also seeing downgrades to consensus earnings growth expectations pick up speed across major regions, as trade uncertainties and tighter financial conditions continue to weigh on economic growth.

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Changes at EDB: IBM’s Asia-Pacific chief exec joins board

The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) has announced board changes at the Economic Development Board (EDB), effective from Feb 1.

Notably, chairman and chief executive officer of IBM Asia Pacific, Ms Harriet Green, was appointed as a new board member. Currently based in Singapore, Ms Green was general manager for IBM’s Watson Internet of Things, customer engagement and education.

“Prior to joining IBM, Harriet was the CEO of the Thomas Cook Group, where she led the successful global transformation and rebranding of the oldest name in leisure travel,” MTI said. Ms Green received an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire award for her services to electronics in 2010.

She is also the recipient of the Women in Technology Institute award, and was inducted into the Women in Technology Hall of Fame in 2016.

Four EDB board members were reappointed. They are Singapore Tourism Board chairman Chaly Mah, Keppel Corp CEO Loh Chin Hua, Singapore Exchange CEO Loh Boon Chye, and Insead dean Ilian Lubomirov Mihov.

EDB also announced the retirement of three board members upon completion of their terms on Jan 31: Blackstone Private Equity senior operating partner Harish Manwani, Hitachi Transport System vice-president and executive officer Ichiro Iino, and IBM global managing director for AT&T Randy Issac Walker.

Straits Times Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED/SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
283	245	Ascendas Reit	276	+4	16604	5.8	1.3
193	161	CapitaCom Trust	191cd	unch	10238	4.6	1
388	398	Capitaland	330	unch	4603	3.6	0.7
240	195	CapitaMall Trust	240cd	+2	13109	4.8	1.2
1359	780	CityDev	912	+3	1624	2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	227	-1	7952	4.6	1.9
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2422	unch	3245	5.9	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US\$929	-10	243	2.3	-
137	85.5	Genting Sing	109	+1	36234	3.2	1.7
39	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	26	-1	18461	3.1	0.6
42	23	HPH Trust USD	US\$25	+0.5	4974	10.5	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US\$703	-3	3132	2.8	0.3
6974	1099	JMH USD	US\$6561	-19	190	2.4	0.7
4080	3155	JSH USD	US\$3746	+42	207	0.9	0.4
169	123	Jardine C&C	145	+2	2540	3.9	9.5
892	567	Keppel Corp	609cd	-5	3415	4.9	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1140	-12	3428	3.2	1.2
566	455	SATS	482	-4	1388	3.7	3.3
330	672	SGX	762cd	+2	2530	3.9	9.5
1184	914	SIA	964	-11	1457	4.1	0.8
292	231	SPH	252	unch	2263	5.2	1.1
371	319	ST Engineering	368	unch	2375	4.1	5.4
360	243	Sembcorp Ind	243	-1	2505	1.9	0.7
361	283	Singtel	302	-1	12619	6.8	1.7
93	57.5	Thomson Medical	7.5	-1	11634	0.9	3.6
3037	2380	UOB	2553	-30	2456	3.9	1.2
925	591	UOL	663	-4	1539	2.6	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1593	+4	1110	3.8	2
333	297	Wilmar Intl	331	+1	6890	3	1
162	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	137	unch	19124	3.3	1

FTSE ST Large & Mid-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED/SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
283	245	Ascendas Reit	276	+4	16604	5.8	1.3
127	105	Ascott Reit	119cd	+2	5951	6	1
76	59	Bumitama Agri	69	-3.5	286	1.1	16
183	143	CDL HTrust	160cd	+2	4762	-	1.1
193	161	CapitaCom Trust	191cd	unch	10238	4.6	1
388	298	Capitaland	330	unch	4603	3.6	0.7
240	195	CapitaMall Trust	240cd	+2	13109	4.8	1.2
1359	780	CityDev	912	+3	1624	2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	227	-1	7952	4.6	1.9
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2422	unch	3245	5.9	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US\$929	-10	243	2.3	-
78	59	Far East HTrust	63	unch	1193	-	0.7
195	150	First Resources	171	-1	399	4	2.2
231	211	Fraser's Cpt Tr	227	xd	572	5.3	109.1
116	101	Fraser's L&I Tr	108	+1	2452	6.3	1.2
137	85.5	Genting Sing	109	+1	36234	3.2	1.7
39	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	26	-1	18461	3.1	0.6
229	167	GuocoLand Ltd	185	unch	215	3.8	0.5
42	23	HPH Trust USD	US\$25	-0.5	4974	10.5	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US\$703	-3	3132	2.8	0.3
6974	1099	JMH USD	US\$6561	-19	190	2.4	0.7
4080	3155	JSH USD	US\$3746	+42	207	0.9	0.4
169	123	Jardine C&C	145	+2	2540	3.9	9.5
892	567	Keppel Corp	609cd	-5	3415	4.9	1
130	108	Keppel Reit	116cd	-1	4049	4.8	0.8
151	151	Keppel REIT	105cd	-1	384	5.5	3.6
273	170	Man Oriental USD	US\$187	-4	126	1.5	1.4
180	152	Mapletree Com Tr	179cd	+1	10038	5.1	1.2
212	184	Mapletree Ind Tr	202cd	-2	6984	5.8	1.4
140	118	Mapletree Log Tr	137cd	unch	15889	5.6	1.2
127	107	Mapletree NAC Tr	124cd	-1	15210	6	0.9
83.5	73	NetLink NBN Tr	77.5	unch	935	-	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1140	-12	3428	3.2	1.2
215	136	OE	149	-2	158	2	0.3
92.5	64.5	OE HTrust	69.5	unch	725	-	0.9
250	157	Olam Intl	187	+1	897	4	1
59.2	28	Oxley	29.5	unch	3685	5.1	0.8
306	256	ParkwayLife Reit	280cd	+1	400	4.6	1.5
121	98	Raffles Medical	111	-1	718	2	2.6
566	455	SATS	482	-4	1388	3.7	3.3
830	672	SGX	762cd	+2	2530	3.9	9.5
1184	914	SIA	964	-11	1457	4.1	0.8
337	220	SIA Engineering	250	unch	354	5.2	1.9
292	231	SPH	252	unch	2263	5.2	1.1
105	98	SPHREIT	102	unch	477	5.4	1.1
371	319	ST Engineering	368	unch	2375	4.1	5.4
360	243	Sembcorp Ind	243	-1	2505	1.9	0.7
281	149	Sembcorp Marine	159	-1	4041	1.3	1.4
58	39	Silverlake Axis	43	+2.5	49865	7	6.2
147	88.5	SingPost	98	-0.5	2368	3.6	1.3
361	283	Singtel	302	-1	12619	6.8	1.7
296	158	StarHub	180	unch	1926	8.9	5.5
77.5	63.5	StarhillGbl Reit	72.5	+0.5	2736	6.3	0.8
213	163	Suntree Reit	195cd	+2	11983	5.1	0.9
93	57.5	ThaiBev	74cd	-1	11634	0.9	3.6
10.2	3.7	Thomson Medical	7.5	-0.1	2126	-	2.7
3037	2380	UOB	2553	-30	2456	3.9	1.2
925	591	UOL	663	-4	1539	2.6	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1593	+4	1110	3.8	2
333	297	Wilmar Intl	331	+1	6890	3	1
243	183	Wing Tai	203	unch	558	3.9	0.5
162	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	137	unch	19124	3.3	1
188	116	Yanlord Land	128	unch	1637	5.3	0.5

FTSE ST Small-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
145	129	AIMSAMP Cap Reit	137	unch	206	7.5	1
70	48	Accordia Golf Tr	53.5	-1	4923	7.2	0.6
90.5	74	Ascendas-hTrust	83.5	unch	677	-	0.8
119	99	Ascendas-iTrust	107	-2	1126	5.7	1.2
58	12.2	Asian Pay TV Tr	12.9	-0.1	1646	50.4	0.2
64	48	Banyan Tree	58.5	unch	641	1.7	0.8
281	115	Best World	267	-1	1128	1.5	9.6
85.5	76	Boustead	79.5	+0.5	72	3.8	1.2
126	79.5	BreadTalk	86	-1.5	132	8.1	2.3
653	521	Bukit Sembawang	563	-2	23	3.2	1.1
88	65.5	Cache Log Trust	72.5cd	-1.5	2727	8.1	1.1
53	39.5	Centurion	40.5	-0.5	62	6.2	0.7
166	104	China Aviation	112	-2	1577	4	0.9
47.5	29.5	China Everbright	35.5	unch	389	14	0.7
165	90.5	China Sunshine	125	unch	485	2.4	1.4
104	64	Chip Eng Seng	69	-1	365	5.8	0.5
53.5	31.5	Cosco	35	unch	3242	-	1.5
700	302	Delong	588	-10	20	-	0.6
28	17.5	Duty Free Intl	20cd	unch	173	9.3	1.3
79	67.5	EC World Reit	72	unch	164	8.4	0.8
59.5	47	ESR-REIT	52	unch	724	7.4	1.1
142	92	First Reit	108	unch	1047	8	1.1
148	134	Fraser's Com Tr	147	+1	6966	6.5	0.9
82	66.5	Fraser's HTrust	72.5	unch	1510	-	0.9
27	16.4	Geo Energy Res	19.6	-0.2	445	5.1	1.2
91	70.5	HRnetGroup	78.5	-0.5	81	2.9	2.4
68	52	Health Mgt Intl	54.5	-0.5	287	0.6	5.2
279	73	Hi-P Intl	89.5	unch	2882	27.9	1.4
283	252	Hong Leong Fin	261	-1	84	5	0.6
81.5	71	IREIT Global	74	unch	0	8	1
41	18.3	Indofood Agri	22	-0.5	623	-	0.3
83	43	Japfa	81	-1	1726	0.6	1.5
82	49	KSH	52	unch	10	4.2	0.9
86.9	53	Kep-KBS Reit USD	69cd	unch	962	9	0.6
149	128	Keppel DC Reit	145xd	-3	4553	5	1.4
189	132	Keppel T&T	188	+1	617	-	1.2
119	7	KrisEnergy	8.5	unch	9734	-	1
79	44.5	Lian Beng	49.5	-0.5	288	4.5	0.4
42.5	18	Lippo Malls Tr	23.5	+0.5	7269	14.6	0.9
53	30	MM2 Asia	32	unch	256	-	1.8
98.5	69.5	ManulifeReit USD	83.5	unch	390	6.6	0.7
120	95	Metro	99	unch	27	5.1	0.6
26	5	Noble	8.1	susp	-	-	-
66.9	45	OUE Com Reit	49	unch	467	9.5	0.6
67	54	PEC	58	-0.5	10	3.4	0.6
46	17	POSH	18	-1	93	-	0.5
64.5	44.5	Q&M Dental	49.5	+0.5	10	3.3	3.5
117	55.5	QAF Ltd	68	unch	44	7.4	0.8
124	96	Riverstone	115	+1	4	2	3.8
55	22	SIIC Environment	33	+1	408	-	0.6
45	38	Sabana Reit	41.5cd	-0.5	394	7.7	0.7
119	90	Sheng Siong	109	-1	365	3	6
25.5	3.3	Sino Grandness	4.7	-0.1	9095	-	0.1
69	56	SoilbuildBizReit	60.xd	unch	969	8.8	1
129	80.5	Tianjin ZX USD	83	-0.5	110	-	0.7
49.5	32.5	Tuan Sing	40	+0.5	985	15	0.5
136	54	UMS	61.5	unch	1127	8.1	1.5
112	58.5	Valuetronics	68.5	unch	880	6.7	156.8
16.1	8.3	Ying Li Intl	11.9	-0.1	1890	-	0.3
52	24	Yoma Strategic	34	+1	3477	0.7	0.9
36.5	16.1	Yongnam	17.7	+0.1	371	-	0.3

(From left) National Environment Agency chairman Liak Teng Lit; Mr Andrew Kwan, group managing director of Commonwealth Capital Group; Mr Kanbei Kokubu, chairman and CEO of Kokubu Group; and Mr Yusuke Arai, deputy chief of mission, Embassy of Japan in Singapore, at the signing ceremony of the joint venture. PHOTO: COMMONWEALTH CAPITAL



S'pore firm, Japan's Kokubu tie up on food supply chain

Joint venture to offer cold-chain logistics services to Asean markets

Sue-Ann Tan

The Singapore firm that owns popular restaurant brands PastaMania and Soup Spoon is teaming up with a Japanese food wholesaler to serve the South-east Asian market. The new company will provide a supply chain to food retailers and related companies. This will include all aspects of food supply, from managing inventory in pre-production to using warehouses with controlled temperatures to providing delivery services to clients. The joint venture – Commonwealth Kokubu Logistics – will combine the managerial expertise of Singapore investment holding company Commonwealth Capital Group with Japanese food wholesaler Kokubu Group.

Commonwealth Capital Group has Swissbake in its portfolio, alongside PastaMania and Soup Spoon. Kokubu runs 279 food logistics and distribution centres in Japan. They deliver items from 10,000 food manufacturers to 35,000 customers, including hotels, restaurants, cafes, supermarkets and convenience stores. The new company is reviewing potential sites in the region to build a network of logistics centres. These centres will have state-of-the-art facilities that guarantee the products remain cold along the logistics chain in the Asean markets. Mr Andrew Kwan, group managing

director of Commonwealth Capital Group, said: "We have now set our sights on establishing similar facilities across all the major cities in South-east Asia. "This will allow us to offer our signature cold-chain logistics services through our own network of contiguous facilities in all the major cities. "I cannot over-emphasise the strategic and economic importance of Asean markets within the emergent Indo-Pacific to a Singapore company, given the geopolitics of our world in recent times. Our expansion into one of the fastest-growing regions of the world is timely, to say the least." The new company will optimise its Singapore fleet of temperature-controlled vehicles by allowing food from various vendors to be consolidated so that clients do not

have to arrange their own transport. It will also use high-tech systems to plan delivery routes. The joint venture will use technologies such as blockchain, artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things in its supply chain, so products can be traced from the farm to the end user, among other benefits. This real-time inventory management should help earn customers' trust in the products, improve safety and cut food wastage. The company will also work with local food manufacturers, food technology firms and specialists to serve meals to the elderly and those with special needs. These meals can be delivered to hotels, hospitals, childcare centres, schools and military bases.

suetan@sph.com.sg

Company Briefs

CDL Hospitality Trusts

Total distribution per stapled security (DPS) for CDL Hospitality Trusts (CDLHT) fell 2.1 per cent to 2.77 cents for its fourth quarter compared with the same period a year ago. Overall revenue and net property income (NPI) both fell 5.4 per cent due to the absence of contribution from three properties. Mainboard-listed CDLHT cited the divestment of two Brisbane hotels in January last year and the closure of a Maldives luxury resort in June last year for renovations. It said its higher NPI contributions elsewhere and "incremental inorganic contribution" from its Italy hotel acquisition were offset by lower British contribution and a weaker New Zealand dollar. Interest expense for the quarter also rose by \$2 million, mainly due to additional loans for the Italy acquisition and its subsequent renovation works. Revenue per available room (RevPAR) rose 2.6 per cent to \$160 while average occupancy rate increased by 2.3 percentage points. Singapore hotels' RevPAR increased 4.3 per cent year on year, due to stable corporate demand, as well as additional business from Asean Summit meetings and Chinese and Indian leisure travellers. Its overall distribution to stapled security holders, after retention for working capital, was \$33.4 million, a 1.5 per cent drop from the year-ago period. Revenue for FY2018 fell 1.2 per cent, with NPI falling 3.8 per cent. Total distribution to stapled security holders increased 1.1 per cent, and DPS edged up 0.4 per cent to 9.26 cents.

OUE H-Trust

OUE Hospitality Trust's (OUE H-Trust) distribution per stapled security (DPS) for the fourth quarter ended Dec 31 last year rose to 1.28 cents, up 0.8 per cent from 1.27 cents. The increase was due to lower interest expense and higher contribution from the retail segment, partially offset by lower income received from the hospitality segment. Gross revenue fell 2.2 per cent to \$33.1 million on the back of lower contributions from both the hospitality and retail segments. Its asset portfolio comprises the 1,077-room Mandarin Orchard Singapore, the adjoining Mandarin Gallery, and the 563-room Crowne Plaza Changi Airport hotel. Net property income was down 1 per cent to \$28.9 million due to lower gross revenue from the properties, partially mitigated by lower property expenses. Income available for distribution climbed 1.3 per cent to \$23.3 million. The distribution payment date is Feb 28.

Ascott Reit DPU up 5% to 2.15 cents

A lift in revenue means an increased payout is in the offing for unit holders of Ascott Residence Trust (Ascott Reit). Distribution per unit (DPU) rose 5 per cent to 2.15 cents in the fourth quarter, it reported yesterday. The increase comes on the back of a 6 per cent lift in unit holders' distribution to \$46.5 million for the three months to Dec 31. This included a one-off partial distribution of divestment gain of \$6.5 million. Revenue rose 2 per cent to \$136.5 million, mainly due to the full-quarter contribution of \$400,000 from Ascott Orchard Singapore, which was acquired in October 2017. There was also higher revenue from existing properties, partially offset by a drop of \$1.1 million from divestments. This brought revenue per available unit to \$163 in the fourth quarter, up 5 per cent from a year earlier. Gross profit increased 3 per cent to \$63.4 million.

Ascott Reit's key markets in the quarter included the United States, China and Japan. Gross profit in the US surged 17 per cent on the back of higher revenue from the upgraded Sheraton Tribeca New York Hotel. In China, excluding the contribution from Citadines Gaoxin Xi'an and Citadines Biyun Shanghai, which were divested in January last year, gross profit grew 16 per cent as there were more guests on long stays. Gross profit in Japan rose 12 per cent due to stronger corporate and leisure demand in Tokyo. DPU rose 1 per cent to 7.16 cents for the full year, while unit holders' distribution rose 2 per cent to \$154.8 million – a record high. Revenue for the year grew 4 per cent to \$514.3 million, while gross profit increased 5 per cent to \$239.4 million. Ascott Reit announced earlier this month that it had sold Ascott Raffles Place Singapore.

Mr Bob Tan, chairman of Ascott Residence Trust Management, said: "These divestments will give Ascott Reit the financial flexibility to invest in new accretive opportunities that will enhance our portfolio and returns to unit holders." The group said yield enhancement may continue to be challenging in the near term, but remains a key focus. Mr Beh Siew Kim, the manager's chief executive, said: "While there are mixed views regarding further interest rate hikes this year, any possible increase is not expected to have any significant impact on Ascott Reit's total returns. "We maintain a disciplined and prudent approach towards capital management, with 80 per cent of total borrowings on fixed interest rates and a well-spread debt maturity where less than 5 per cent of debt will mature in 2019." Ascott Reit units closed up 1.71 per cent to \$1.19 yesterday.

Interbank currency rates

Currencies	Against US\$		Against US\$	
	Bid	Offer	Bid	Offer
Jan 29				
Source: OTC				
SS/US\$ to one unit of foreign currency:				
Australian dollar	0.9680	0.9689	0.7159	0.7160
Canadian dollar	1.0190	1.0201	0.7538	0.7536
Euro	1.5461	1.5479	1.1434	1.1439
NZ dollar	0.9260	0.9269	0.6848	0.6850
Sterling pound	1.7764	1.7784	1.3137	1.3142
US dollar	1.3522	1.3532	-	-
SS/US\$ to 100 units of foreign currency:				
Chinese renminbi	20.0674	20.0876	14.8405	14.8445
Danish kroner	20.7123	20.7308	15.3175	15.3198
Hong Kong dollar	1.723	1.725	12.7450	12.7458
Indian Rupee	1.90	1.90	1.4055	1.4059
Indonesia rupiah	0.0096	0.0096	0.0071	0.0071
Japanese yen	123.77	123.91	0.9153	0.9157
Korean won	0.1209	0.1212	0.0894	0.0896
Malaysian ringgit	3.287	3.292	24.3072	24.3250
New Taiwan dollar	4.3857	4.3904	32.434	32.444
Norwegian kroner	15.9008	15.9219	11.7592	11.7661
Philippine peso	25.776	25.805	19.062	19.069
Saudi riyal	36.0519	36.0796	26.6617	26.6624
Swedish krona	14.9409	14.9569	11.0494	11.0530
Swiss franc	136.2555	136.4113	100.7658	100.8065
Thai Baht	4.2859	4.2918	3.1696	3.1716

Government securities

GOVERNMENT BONDS						
Period	Issue code	Coupon rate (%)	Maturity	Jan 29		
				Close Bid	High	Day's Low
2-Year	NV05100N	3.250%	01-Sep-20	101.90	101.92	101.90
5-Year	N519100A	2.000%	01-Feb-24	99.72	99.75	99.72
10-Year	NX18100A	2.625%	01-May-28	103.56	103.70	103.65
15-Year	NZ13100V	3.375%	01-Sep-33	111.07	111.20	111.10
20-Year	NZ16100X	2.250%	01-Aug-36	96.07	96.05	96.00
30-Year	NA16100H	2.750%	01-Mar-46	102.14	0.00	0.00

Note: Based on latest issue

Source: Monetary Authority of Singapore

MSCI INDICES

Jan 28	Index	In local curr	
		%dy Change	%yr Change
World Preliminary	1512.0	-1.0	4.9
EAFE Preliminary	1050.5	-0.7	4.2
Europe Preliminary	1460.0	-0.8	3.9
Australia	1187.9	0.0	4.1
Austria Preliminary	535.9	-1.3	7.6
Belgium Preliminary	979.7	-1.5	7.1
Canada Preliminary	1961.4	-0.3	7.1
Denmark Preliminary	7593.4	-0.3	2.5
Finland Preliminary	711.4	-1.4	8.9
France Preliminary	1773.0	-0.7	3.5
Germany Preliminary	902.0	-0.6	6.9
Greece Preliminary	45.9	-1.2	5.8
India	1241.4	-1.2	-1.7
Indonesia	7391.9	-0.7	4.5
Ireland Preliminary	191.2	0.0	6.7
Israel Preliminary	252.1	0.4	9.3
Italy Preliminary	663.3	-1.0	6.6
Japan	933.1	-0.6	4.5
Korea	653.0	0.0	8.1
Malaysia	588.4	-0.3	1.2
Netherlands Preliminary	1540.7	-0.8	5.7
New Zealand	138.4	-0.1	4.3
Norway Preliminary	2868.7	-1.0	3.0
Pakistan	410.8	0.2	15.1
Philippines	1371.5	0.1	8.7
Portugal Preliminary	83.2	-1.5	3.0
Singapore	1669.0	0.0	4.7
Singapore Free	358.9	0.0	4.7

Source: MSCI

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*There's magic in her touch, there's warmth in her heart.
There's kindness in her smile, she makes our lives worthwhile.
We find hope in her eyes, her words are warm and wise.
There's love in everything she does, she'll be dearly missed by all of us.*



TAY KAR SIM

Age: 84
passed away peacefully on 28 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Husband: Koh Chew Seng

Children:

Koh Teck Siew
Koh Teck Chor
Koh Teck Lee
Koh Teck Siang
Koh Teck Woo
Koh Thong Wei

Spouses:

Wong Wai Mong
Chang Faa Shoon
Tan Yeu Kiat Eugene
Tay Cheow Khooon Leslie
Tan Boon Hee

Grandchildren:

Huang Jue Jing
Huang Jue Wei
Chang Yin Hong
Chang Yin Hao
Tan Poah Shiun Shawn
Tay Yu Hong
Koh Yiang Dhee Mitchell
Koh Sheng Dhee Nicholas

Spouses:

Wee Mei Ling
Wong She Germaine
Koh Wen Mei Vanessa

Great Grandchild:
Huang Ziting Alexa

And all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at 108 Joo Chiat Terrace S'pore 427259.
Cortege will leave on Friday, 1 February 2019 at 12pm
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 3 for cremation at 1pm.

With Deepest Sympathy &
Heartfelt Condolences to
The Family of the Late



PAK EKA TJIPTA WIDJAJA

Departed on 26 January 2019

From:
The Chairman and
Members of the NTU Board of Trustees,
President, Provost,
Management, Faculty, Staff,
Students and Alumni
Nanyang Technological University




BACHAN KAUR
W/O LATE JASSA SINGH SHAHID
AGE: 82
passed away peacefully on 29 Jan 2019, leaving behind

PHAJAN KAUR	GURMIT SINGH JODHE
PERGAS KAUR	SAWARAN SINGH RANDHAWA
GURNAM KAUR	DILJIT SINGH ATHWAL
BALDAVE SINGH	MERLY V. ZAMORA
GURMIT KAUR	PARAMJIT SINGH NAURA
MALKIT SINGH	SUPINDER KAUR

Brothers, Sisters, Grandchildren, Relatives & Friends

Cremation ceremony will be held on 30 Jan 2019 (Wednesday), 4.15pm at Mandai Crematorium Hall 4. Buses will leave at 3pm from Home in Potong Pasir (address below) & Central Sikh Temple, No 2 Towner Road.

Sehaj Path will be held at 139 Potong Pasir Ave 3 #04-132, S350139. Antam Ardas will be held at Sri Guru Singh Sabha on 14 Feb 2019, 4-6pm - 90/92 Wilkie Road.

Please treat this as a personal invitation.

The family also wishes to express their heartfelt thanks and appreciation to Relatives, Friends, Doctors & Nurses at ward 5B & 83 @ TTSH & Sikh Welfare Council for their kind assistance, condolences & blessings.

Enquiries: 90142577 Baldave / 98507641 Malkit

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Psalm 23:6



RAYMOND WONG AH BOK

Age: 78
was called home to be with the Lord on 28 January 2019, dearly missed by loved ones.

Wife: Hui Man Ying Monica (deceased)

Son:
Wong Chin Tong

Daughter-in-law:
Cheong Lee Lin

Daughters:
Wong Chin Lee
Wong Chin Chyn Clare

Son-in-law:
Lau Wei Peng Patrick

Grandchildren:
Wong Jia Xuan Vernice, Wong Jia Yi Davyan

Wake is held at Blk 5B Holland Close S'pore 272005.
Funeral mass will be held on 1 February at 11am at Blessed Sacrament Church and thereafter to Mandai Crematorium Hall 2 for cremation at 1pm.



In memory of
a loved one

6th Anniversary
In Loving Memory Of



TAN GEOK HWA
Departed on 30 January 2013

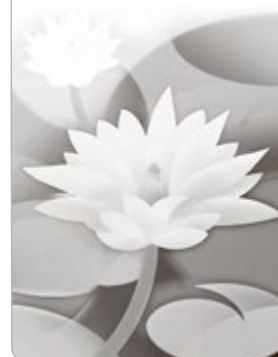
Dear Mother
Within us you will always remain.
Deeply missed & always remembered by
Children, Daughters-in-law,
Grandchildren and all loved ones.

*In Everloving
Memory of*



KONG CHAI LIAN
Departed 30/1/2005
Always loved & remembered by
Daughters,
Grandchildren &
Great Grandchildren

"In memoriam"
is for the loved
ones whom you
remember...



Timothy Wee Wei-Wen

Age: 35

Passed away peacefully on 28 January 2019.
He will be missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Father: Robert Wee Meng Hoe
Mother: Hilda Wee
Sister: Marjorie Wee

Grandmother, uncles, aunts and cousins,
and his beloved dogs Tanner & Tobias.

Wake is held at Singapore Casket Level 4, Topaz Hall,
131 Lavender Street, Singapore 338737
from Wednesday 30 January 2019, 11.00am onwards.

Cortege leaves on Friday 1 February 2019
at 2.45pm for Mandai Crematorium Hall 3
for cremation at 3.45pm.

The Partners,
Management & Staff of
Ho & Wee LLP
Advocates & Solicitors



Sadly announce the passing of our beloved

Timothy Wee Wei-Wen

Departed on 28 January 2019

He will be deeply missed
and fondly remembered.

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SPORT

16

PROMOTERS PROTEST AGAINST OWNERS
LIBERTY MEDIA'S RUNNING OF F1

PASSING OF BATON
TO LOCAL COACHES

10 of them will train senior and age-group relay squads; Herrmann won't be replaced

Laura Chia

Singapore Athletics (SA) is not looking to fill the technical director position vacated by Volker Herrmann last month. Instead, SA president Tang Weng Fei is putting his faith in a host of local coaches.

He said: "I am a firm believer that local coaches are good enough. "Maybe we will look at it in the future but, at the moment, we need to strengthen local coaches and local conditions."

In a sign of that belief, SA is appointing 10 locals to train the senior and age-group relay teams (Under-20s, U-18s and U-16s), according to a post on the SA Facebook page which has since been deleted.

These include veterans such as Tang Ngai Kin and recent national athletes such as Amirudin Jamal.

The coaches were appointed "under the vision" of the association's management committee and national relay coach Hamkah Afik.

When contacted, some of the coaches declined comment. ST understands that up to 10 athletes will train in each group, with the fastest four making up the quartet for that group. The groups will also train together once a fortnight.

Tang added that the new system will help to identify the best athletes because there will be a "continuous follow-up on newer athletes who may be better".

"It is part and parcel of sport. If you're not good enough, we will give you time to catch up. But, if you don't, someone else who's more deserving will come," he said.

"This system also builds up team spirit. It's a fun way of getting the team together and improving their individual skill sets."

He also hailed the appointment of former national athletes such as SEA Games medallists Amirudin and Lee Cheng Wei.

"They can help young athletes progress and grow by passing on their expertise," he said, adding that the target is to make the sprint relay finals in the 2019 SEA Games and the 2022 Asian Games.

Top sprinters Timothee Yap and Shanti Pereira are optimistic, with Yap saying the system has "no downsides".

"The biggest benefit is youth development. This promotes chemistry because you're under the same system, and you get used to the techniques, objectives and the entire feel. That breeds consistency," the 24-year-old told ST.

"If there's a change in one level, the rest will follow suit."

"When they progress from junior to senior, there isn't much to catch up on in relay skills and they can focus on improving base speed."

Pereira, the 2015 SEA Games 200m champion, agreed that there will be smoother transitions between age groups.

The 22-year-old said: "I like this system because it sparks a sense of camaraderie among the coaches as well as the athletes throughout the different groups."

Yap, who ran at the 2016 Rio Olympics on a wild card, added: "This is also about trying to create an identity for the Singapore relay team, to instil a sense of pride."

"Hopefully, we'll be able to motivate and encourage youth to be proud to represent Singapore."

"I hope that relays will be Singapore's go-to medal hopes. If we send a relay team somewhere, we know we'll definitely come back with a medal."

claura@sph.com.sg



Shanti Pereira passing the baton to anchor runner Nur Izlyn Zaini in the 2017 SEA Games 4x100m final, where they set a Singapore record of 44.96 seconds with Wendy Enn and Dipna Lim Prasad. ST FILE PHOTO

ATHLETICS NATIONAL RELAY TEAM COACHES

SENIOR MEN Hamkah Afik and Tang Ngai Kin	U-18 MEN Lim Yao Peng
SENIOR WOMEN Melvin Tan and Margaret Oh	U-18 WOMEN Joy Kuan
UNDER-20 MEN Lee Cheng Wei	U-16 BOYS Amirudin Jamal
U-20 WOMEN Alfred Sim	U-16 GIRLS Asmah Hanim



Almoez Ali curling the ball into the bottom corner for Qatar's second goal in their Asian Cup semi-final against the United Arab Emirates at the Mohammed bin Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi last night. They won 4-0 and have yet to concede in six games. PHOTO: REUTERS

Asian Cup 2019

Qatar hammer hosts UAE before hostile crowd

SEMI-FINAL
Qatar 4
United Arab Emirates 0

ABU DHABI • Qatar, 2022 World Cup hosts, cruised into Friday's Asian Cup final against Japan in style, still yet to concede in six matches after a 4-0 rout of hosts United Arab Emirates yesterday.

The opener came on 22 minutes

when goalkeeper Khalid Eisa let a seemingly harmless Boualem Khoukhi shot from the edge of the box sneak under his hands.

Almoez Ali doubled the lead on 37 minutes with his eighth goal of the tournament, a curler into the bottom corner that equalled the record by Iranian legend Ali Daei in 1996.

In the 81st minute, Hassan Al-Haydos broke away and dinked the ball over the goalkeeper.

Then UAE's Ismail Ahmed was sent off for an off-the-ball elbow after Mexican referee Cesar Ramos reviewed the incident on the pitch-side monitor.

Hamid Ismail completed the rout three minutes into stoppage time in a two-on-three counter.

The clash at the Mohammed bin Zayed Stadium was played under a cloud of political dispute in the Gulf. The UAE, Saudi Arabia,

Bahrain and Egypt have imposed a diplomatic, trade and transport boycott of Qatar since June 2017 over allegations Doha supports terrorism, a charge Qatar denies.

Qatar faced a hostile crowd at the sold-out 43,000-seat stadium in Abu Dhabi, where the emirate's sport authority offered free tickets to UAE fans.

Qatari nationals, who previously travelled freely in the Gulf, cannot enter the UAE unless they receive a special permit. But the team have had support from some Omanis, whose country has taken a neutral stand in the row.

Japan beat Iran 3-0 on Monday and are now seeking their fifth title, while Iran coach Carlos Queiroz has said he was standing down after nearly eight years.

The former Real Madrid coach had been hoping to deliver Iran's

first continental title since 1976 but Japan scored three second-half goals to send them crashing out.

"I think the simplest thing to do is to copy the famous song: 'And now, the end is here,'" the 65-year-old Portuguese said, misquoting the famous Frank Sinatra song, My Way.

"I'm very happy and very proud because I did it my way."

"A huge, huge thank you to my players for everything. Taking into account the difficulties... They are going to be in my heart for the rest of my life."

Queiroz, who has been linked with Colombia, took Iran to the World Cup Finals twice, earning one win in six matches.

REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

OUR BEST IS YET TO COME: MANE

Reds forward confident link-up with Firmino, Salah will reap more goals in EPL title run-in

LONDON • The heat is on for the English Premier League title race and, with champions Manchester City hot on their heels, the next four months will be a stern test of Liverpool's mental fortitude.

But Reds forward Sadio Mane believes his team can cope with the pressure and step up a gear in the run-in to deliver a first league title since 1990.

"We heard what some of the media were saying about us not starting off by playing as fast and exciting as last year, and we felt we weren't at our best ourselves at times," Mane told World Soccer.

"The results have been there, but we know we could have done more with some of our performances.

"We are very competitive, but know there is even more to come, for sure. In many ways, the team is stronger and we have produced some very mature performances.

"Hopefully we will hit our top form when it matters most."

Jurgen Klopp's league leaders, who host Leicester at Anfield today, have a four-point cushion over City but their lead could be cut to a solitary point by the time they kick off, as Pep Guardiola's men faced Newcastle 24 hours earlier.

Defender Virgil van Dijk is a doubt owing to illness. The Dutchman has not trained fully since returning from the club's warm-weather training camp in Dubai.

Senegal international Mane is determined to hold off City and create history for the Merseyside club.

He added: "I can't wait to lift a trophy with Liverpool. I know the fans are desperate for us to win the Premier League.

"It would be an amazing moment for the club. It has been far too long for a team the size of Liverpool.

"We believe we are heading in the

right direction, but there are some very tough rivals – City were unbelievable last season and very strong again – but why not?"

The front three of Mane, Roberto Firmino and Mohamed Salah scored a combined 91 goals for Liverpool last season.

The trio were all on target during the frenetic 4-3 victory over Crystal Palace on Jan 19, with Mane's stoppage-time effort ultimately proving to be the winner at Anfield.

And the 26-year-old is confident the trio's telepathic partnership will produce more goals in the title run-in. He said: "I think it just happened naturally. When you have players like Bobby and Mo, they just make everything easier.

"We just seem to instinctively know each other's movement and I think you can see that we enjoy playing together. We want to get even better and score even more goals. Our best is still to come."

Mane was one of eight Liverpool players – including Salah, Firmino, Andy Robertson and Trent Alexander-Arnold – to sign contract exten-

sions to 2023 or beyond in the past eight months. And he revealed that Salah and Firmino were the reasons behind his decision to commit his future to the Reds.

"All I can say is that my only concern is Liverpool. Mo, Bobby... It seemed like everyone was signing contracts and they were saying, 'Hey Sadio, when are you going to sign?'," he said. "I said to each of them, 'Don't worry bro, I will sign'. And what did I do? I signed so they are pleased now."

According to The Times, the contract renewals will cost the club as much as £200 million (\$356 million), and manager Klopp said it is key to retain his best players.

"The club gave us a fantastic opportunity to bring in outstanding players, to keep outstanding players. My job is to make sure we perform on the pitch," the German said after the raft of contract renewals.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LIVERPOOL V LEICESTER
Singtel TV Ch102 & StarHub Ch227, tomorrow, 4am



LIVERPOOL
FAB THREE'S
LEAGUE
GOALS HAUL

2017-18
(38 GAMES)
57
(AVERAGE: 1.5)

MOHAMED
SALAH
32

ROBERTO
FIRMINO
15

SADIO
MANE
10

2018-19
(23 GAMES)
34
(AVERAGE: 1.48)

MOHAMED
SALAH
16

ROBERTO
FIRMINO
9

SADIO
MANE
9

Liverpool's Senegal international Sadio Mane says his strike partners Mohamed Salah and Roberto Firmino are the reasons behind his decision to extend his contract to 2023.
PHOTO: REUTERS

Crucial to beat Watford to stop losing streak: Moura

LONDON • Tottenham forward Lucas Moura has urged his team to get back to winning ways, after Spurs crashed out of two domestic Cup competitions in the past week.

After losing in the League Cup semi-finals at Chelsea via a penalty shoot-out, Spurs also suffered a shock defeat by Crystal Palace in the fourth round of the FA Cup.

This means that they are left with two trophies to fight for this season – the Premier League, where they

are third and nine points behind leaders Liverpool (60 points), and the Champions League, where they face Borussia Dortmund in the last 16 next month.

Spurs have not won a title since their League Cup win in 2008 and Moura said that it is crucial that the team turn their fortunes around, starting with a home league game against Watford today.

"The most important thing now is to return to a win," the Brazilian

said on the club website on Monday, a day after manager Mauricio Pochettino suggested that finishing in the top four in the league should be their priority.

"It is a difficult moment. But we need to stay together, stay strong because we know that we have talent. We need to keep our heads up.

"We have a lot of experience, great players and we will be good for the rest of the season."

Wounded by fatigue and injuries

to key attacking players like Harry Kane and Dele Alli, Spurs will at least have Moura to provide some firepower up front.

The 26-year-old returned to the starting line-up against Palace on Sunday after a knee problem.

Forward Son Heung-min is also back earlier than expected after South Korea's Asian Cup quarter-final exit to Qatar, although he may not be ready to feature today after missing three games.

"He's so tired, he played three games. Very tough games," Pochettino said. "We hope he'll be available and ready on Wednesday to help the team." THE GUARDIAN

TOTTENHAM V WATFORD
Singtel TV Ch104 & StarHub Ch229, tomorrow, 4am

Blues will not let Hudson-Odoi leave

LONDON • Maurizio Sarri has confirmed that Callum Hudson-Odoi will remain with the club, just days after he requested a transfer, saying the 18-year-old is "the future of Chelsea and English football".

The forward, who has 18 months left on his contract, scored in Sunday's 3-0 FA Cup fourth-round win over Sheffield Wednesday, but has yet to start a Premier League match this season.

Speaking ahead of today's league trip to Bournemouth, Chelsea manager Sarri said: "On the pitch, I am very happy with him.

"The club told me in this market window he will remain with us for sure, and very probably in the next. I am really very happy with this.

"He is improving. I think he will

be the future of our club and English football."

Hudson-Odoi, the subject of a £35 million (\$62 million) bid from German champions Bayern Munich, said he is concerned about his lack of playing time at Stamford Bridge.

But he is unlikely to start today, with Sarri putting his faith in Gonzalo Higuain, the striker he coached while they were at Napoli.

He joined last week on loan from Juventus until the end of the season while Chelsea striker Alvaro Morata has moved to Atletico Madrid in an 18-month loan deal.

The Argentinian Higuain, 31, played in the FA Cup and could make his league debut today for the Blues, who are fourth on 47 points.

Sarri is happy with the progress of his team, who can still win four titles this campaign, in his first season in charge of the London club.

"In the Premier League, there is not a normal match, it is so difficult," the Italian said.

"We have to play a difficult (League Cup) final and FA Cup, we have to fight in Premier League. At the moment, I am happy. We need to improve, we can do that."

Chelsea have been drawn against United in the FA Cup fifth round, a repeat of last year's final which they won 1-0.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

BOURNEMOUTH V CHELSEA
Singtel TV Ch103 & StarHub Ch228, tomorrow, 3.35am

FA CUP 5TH-ROUND DRAW

- Bristol City v Shrewsbury or Wolves
- Wimbledon v Millwall
- Doncaster v Crystal Palace
- Middlesbrough or Newport v Manchester City
- Chelsea v Manchester United
- Swansea v Barnet or Brentford
- Portsmouth or QPR v Watford
- Brighton or West Brom v Derby
- Ties: Feb 15-18

SPORTS FIXTURES HIGHLIGHTS			
Event	Home	Away	Timing
Thu, 31 Jan 2019			
Italian Cup	Fiorentina	Roma	1.15am
French League Cup	Strasbourg	Bordeaux	1.45am
English Premier	Southampton	Crystal Palace	3.45am
English Premier	Bournemouth	Chelsea	3.45am
English Premier	Tottenham	Watford	4.00am
English Premier	Liverpool	Leicester	4.00am
French League	Nantes	St Etienne	4.00am

LW* : Telecast not available at Livewire(Singapore Pools)
Visit singaporepools.com for the latest 'Live' telecast listing.

LOTTERY	
TOTO	Mon, 28 Jan 2019 Draw No. 3444/2019
Group 1 Prize: \$2,941,606 * 1 Winning Share	
Sold at: 1. Fatt Chye Heng Trading, Blk 7 Hougang Avenue 3 #01-48 (One Quick Pick System 7 Entry)	
Draw No. 3445/2019 Next Draw Fri, 1 Feb 2019 Draw Venue: Singapore Pools (Private) Limited, 210 Middle Road, #01-01, Singapore 188994	Group 1 Prize \$5,000,000 est.

No person under the age of 18 years shall be allowed to purchase a ticket or to claim any prize.
LW: Livewire (MBS) & Livewire (RWS) (21 years and above)
Livewire (Singapore Pools) (21 years and above during 'Live' telecast)
SB: SportsBuzz@Cine (21 years and above)
Singapore Pools Account Service. Call 6796 6688 for more details.
RCS Reg No.: 196802020

PLAY RESPONSIBLY
Size Limit: National Problem Gambling Helpline: 1800-6-666-666
Singapore Pools Account Service. Call 6796 6688 for more details.
RCS Reg No.: 196802020

PELICANS STAND FIRM ON DAVIS

Forward wants to be traded to NBA title contender but team say they won't rush into talks

NEW YORK • The New Orleans Pelicans confirmed on Monday that forward Anthony Davis has asked to be traded, but insisted they would not be "dictated to" when it comes to letting their star go.

Davis, a five-time All-Star and a member of the 2012 London Olympic gold-medal squad, has told the team he will not sign a contract extension and wants to be traded to a National Basketball Association (NBA) contender before the league's Feb 7 transfer deadline.

"Although we are disappointed in this decision, our organisation's top priority is to bring an NBA championship to our city and fans and build our team for long-term success," the Pelicans said in a state-

ment.

"Relative to specific talks of a trade, we will do this on our terms and our timeline. One that makes the most sense for our team and it will not be dictated by those outside of our organisation."

The statement added: "We have also requested the league to strictly enforce the tampering rules associated with this transaction."

The last sentence could be interpreted as a reference to Davis' agent Rich Paul's long-time relationship with another star client, LeBron James of the Los Angeles Lakers, since the Lakers have been considered the league's most ardent suitor for Davis for months.

Last year, James said that it would be "amazing" if he could play with Davis. But the NBA later cleared the star forward of tampering.

Davis also faces possible league discipline because the NBA typically fines players when they, or their representatives, publicly request a trade.

"We commenced an investigation this morning upon reading the reports regarding Anthony Davis," NBA spokesman Mike Bass said on Monday. "That process is ongoing."

The 25-year-old Davis, the top pick in the 2012 NBA Draft, shares second spot with 29.3 points a game and is third in the league with 13.3 rebounds per contest.

He also has 4.4 assists, 2.6 blocked shots and 1.7 steals a game this season for New Orleans.

Sidelined by a sprained left index finger since Jan 19 but expected to return to action this week, Davis could become a free agent in 2020 and sign a five-year contract extension worth US\$240 million (\$\$326.4 million) after this season.

The New York Times reported that Paul has not given the Pelicans any preference as to which team Davis wants to join.

Paul said the decision was made "to let them know by the deadline so they could do what's best for the organisation going forward".

Besides the Lakers, another team expected to be interested in Davis are the Boston Celtics.

The Celtics, however, are ineligible to acquire Davis via trade while the All-Star guard Kyrie Irving is on their roster. League rules preclude one team from having two players on the designated rookie scale contract extensions possessed by both Davis and Irving.

At 22-28 with seven losses in their past eight games, the Pelicans are 13th of 15 clubs in the Western Conference, six wins behind the Los Angeles Clippers for the eighth and final play-off berth.

The Pelicans have missed the play-offs in four of six seasons since drafting Davis, but swept Portland in the first round of last season's play-offs for their first post-season series triumph since 2008.

New Orleans fell in the second round to eventual champions the Golden State Warriors.

NYTIMES, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Golden State Warriors centre DeMarcus Cousins dunks against the Indiana Pacers during the fourth quarter of their 132-100 win at the Bankers Life Fieldhouse on Monday. PHOTO: USA TODAY SPORTS

Warriors display play-off mentality in rout of Pacers

LOS ANGELES • It was easy to see why the Golden State Warriors are two-time National Basketball Association (NBA) defending champions this season.

In their 50th game this season, a 132-100 rout of hosts Indiana Pacers on Monday night - they already played like they are preparing to go into the play-offs at this stage.

"Coach hit us with 'what game this is, I think it's 50'," superstar Stephen Curry said on ESPN after the Western Conference leaders improved their record to 36-14.

"And you think about how quickly that springs on you. You get back from All-Star break (in February), you still have 30 games and you're like, 'All right, this is play-off mentality time', and you start to ramp it up, so we're starting early."

The point guard scored 26 points on Monday, becoming the first

NBA player to make 200 three-pointers in seven straight seasons after going six of eight from beyond the arc.

The Warriors also stretched the longest winning streak in the league this season to 11 as they wrapped up a five-game road trip in style in Indianapolis.

Curry connected on 10 of 13 shots from the field and did most of the damage in the first half.

His 23 points included eight straight to break a 16-16 tie midway through the first quarter, a burst that put the Warriors on their way. "Just a really good way to finish it," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said of the convincing end to the road trip.

"I was a little worried about this game. Everybody's anxious to get home, but we've finished off the trip the right way."

"We're in a groove, we're in a

good place. We've just got to keep going."

DeMarcus Cousins added 22 points for the Warriors, shaking off a scary fall in the first quarter.

Cousins, playing just his fifth game for the Warriors after missing almost an entire year with a torn Achilles tendon, went down hard after Indiana's Myles Turner fouled him in transition in the first quarter.

"I wasn't actually hurt, I was more spooked from the fall," said Cousins, who was slow to rise but stayed in the game.

Kevin Durant added 16 points for the Warriors, who let "banged up" Draymond Green sit out to rest.

Myles Turner led the Pacers (32-17) with 16 points, but Indiana dropped their second straight since losing guard Victor Oladipo to a season-ending knee injury.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Anthony Davis of the New Orleans Pelicans on the bench in the game against the Detroit Pistons last Wednesday. He has been out with a sprained left index finger but is set to return this week. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WHERE ANTHONY DAVIS RANKS THIS SEASON

POINTS: 29.3 POINTS PER GAME

T-2

REBOUNDS: 13.3 PER GAME

3rd

Library talks by seasoned journalists
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What's trending for travel
in the US and beyond



Lee Siew Hua
Travel Writer,
The Straits Times

Central Public Library
100 Victoria Street
B1-01 Programme Zone

Friday, Feb 15, 2019
7 to 8.30pm
(Registration starts at 6pm)

Sign up at
<http://str.sg/askSiewHua3>



Richard Launder
President and CEO
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For more information, go to www.straitstimes.com/askst

Murray gets 'metal hip' in bid to end pain and extend career

LONDON • Former world No. 1 tennis star Andy Murray said yesterday that he has undergone hip resurfacing surgery in London.

The 31-year-old Scot has struggled to regain form since undergoing hip surgery last year and was knocked out in the first round of the Australian Open this month, having said the tournament could be his last as a professional.

His post on Instagram featured an X-ray picture of his hip.

"I now have a metal hip," Murray wrote in his post. "Feeling a bit battered and bruised just now but hopefully that will be the end of my hip pain."

In an emotional news conference in Melbourne before the Australian Open, Murray said he would retire this year, preferably after Wimbledon.

The two-time Olympic champion told BBC this month that surgery was the only option if he

wanted to extend his career.

"There is a strong possibility I won't come back and play after an operation. I want to play tennis, but not with the hip I have right now," he said.

The ATP Tour posted a tweet in support for Murray: "Get well soon Andy, we know you will do everything to get back on tour!"

The three-time Grand Slam champion initially had surgery on his right hip in January last year and has played 15 matches since returning to action last June. He was due to play in next month's Marseille Open but withdrew from the tournament last week.

Meanwhile, Australia's Davis Cup captain Lleyton Hewitt has criticised Barcelona footballer Gerard Pique and his Spanish investment group Kosmos for making sweeping changes to the 119-year-old tennis competition.

The Cup will be revamped to cre-

ate a tennis World Cup after the International Tennis Federation (ITF) signed a 25-year, US\$3 billion (\$\$4 billion) deal with Kosmos.

The home-away system will be replaced by an 18-team tournament played over a week in Madrid while the usual five sets will be reduced to three.

Hewitt believes it was "ridiculous" to make so many changes to the sport's premier international tournament.

"He (Pique) knows nothing about tennis. It'd be like me asking to change things for the Champions League," he told reporters ahead of Australia's Davis Cup qualifier against Bosnia-Herzegovina.

"The two biggest points of difference were, one, the home and away aspect of it and, secondly, the best of five sets."

"If you look at the pinnacle of our sport, which are the four majors, they're best of five sets." REUTERS

CLUELESS ABOUT TENNIS

He (Pique) knows nothing about tennis. It'd be like me asking to change things for the Champions League... If you look at the pinnacle of our sport, which are the four majors, they're best of five sets.



LLEYTON HEWITT, Australia's Davis Cup captain, disagreeing with Barcelona footballer Gerard Pique's revamp.

SPORT

PROMOTERS PROTEST AGAINST F1 OWNERS

Liberty Media under fire for ‘disjointed ideas’ and restricting free live television broadcasts

LONDON • A majority of Formula One’s grand prix promoters issued a statement on Monday expressing concern about how the sport is being run by owners Liberty Media. The Formula One Promoters’ Association (Fopa), which represents 16 grands prix including Singapore, had met in London to discuss the situation ahead of the 21-race season starting in Australia in March. “It is not in the long-term interest of the sport that fans lose free access to content and broadcasting,” it said in a three-point statement. “There is a lack of clarity on new initiatives in F1 and a lack of engagement with promoters on their im-

plementation. “New races should not be introduced to the detriment of existing events although the association is encouraged by the alternative business models being offered to prospective venues.” Fopa said members wanted “a more collaborative approach” as well as “the opportunity to offer their experience and expertise in a spirit of partnership with F1 and the (governing body) FIA”. The chairman of Fopa is Stuart Pringle, managing director of Britain’s Silverstone circuit that hosted the first championship GP in 1950. It is one of five circuits out

of contract after this season, the others being Germany’s Hockenheim, Italy’s historic Monza track, Barcelona’s Circuit de Catalunya and Mexico City. Only one race, the British GP, will be broadcast live and free-to-air in Britain this year with the rest on Sky Sports pay TV. While there are no new races this year, Vietnam is lined up for a race in Hanoi from 2020 while a possible Miami GP remains on the cards after Austin (Texas). The Daily Mail suggested Liberty, which took over from CVC in 2017 when it also ousted previous commercial supremo Bernie Ecclestone, faced a promoter rebellion. “Everyone is disgruntled. Liberty’s ideas are disjointed,” Pringle was quoted as saying. “We have all been compliant, but

we have great concerns about the future health of the sport under the people who run it now.” He added that the deal being offered to Miami, which has yet to be signed off by the local authorities, was of particular concern. “Miami is seemingly getting a free deal,” he said. “That has not gone down well with anyone, not least with the guys at Austin, Texas, who are working hard to make their race pay.” F1 recently trumpeted a rise in worldwide audience figures across TV and digital platforms last year. Sean Bratches, F1’s managing director for motor sports, said in November last year that the sport wanted to keep its “heritage races” but it also had to operate like a business. “Nothing is immutable in this sport,” he said. REUTERS

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

There is a lack of clarity on new initiatives in F1 and a lack of engagement with promoters on their implementation.



FOPA STATEMENT, expressing concern about how Formula One is being run by owners Liberty Media.

FUTURE IN JEOPARDY

Everyone is disgruntled. Liberty’s ideas are disjointed. We have all been compliant, but we have great concerns about the future health of the sport under the people who run it now.



STUART PRINGLE, chairman of Fopa, voicing his disapproval against Liberty Media.

SportsWorld

Keane to assist O’Neill at second-tier Forest

LONDON • Roy Keane will once again link up with Martin O’Neill to become Nottingham Forest assistant manager, the Championship football club announced on Monday. The 47-year-old was part of the backroom staff during O’Neill’s five-year spell in charge of the Republic of Ireland between 2013 and 2018. Keane, like O’Neill, is a favourite at the City Ground. He made more than 100 appearances for the club between 1990 and 1993 before moving to Manchester United, where he won seven Premier League titles. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Korean defender Kim snubs EPL for China

SHANGHAI • South Korean defender Kim “Monster” Min-jae yesterday snubbed interest from the Premier League and the advice of his teammates to sign for Beijing Guoan in China. The 22-year-old centre-back, whose football club Jeonbuk Motors said that they had received a bid from Watford reported to be about US\$8 million (\$\$10.8 million), instead plumped for the Chinese Super League (CSL). Guoan, who finished fourth in the CSL last season, announced Kim’s signing but did not disclose the size of the transfer fee. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Sharapova off to winning debut

SAINT PETERSBURG • Russian tennis star Maria Sharapova made a victorious debut at the WTA Saint Petersburg indoor tournament, beating Daria Gavrilova of Australia in straight sets on Monday. The 31-year-old Sharapova prevailed 6-0, 6-4 in 1hr 45min to chalk up her third win in four head-to-head meetings with Russian-born Gavrilova. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Marin faces long spell out with knee injury

MADRID • Spain’s Olympic badminton gold medallist Carolina Marin is a doubt for the world championships in August after rupturing the anterior cruciate ligament in her right knee. The 25-year-old, a winner of three of the past four world titles, hurt herself in last Sunday’s Indonesia Masters final and was forced to retire while leading Saina Nehwal of India. The Spanish badminton federation said Marin would undergo surgery and start rehabilitation next week for an injury that typically requires a recovery period of at least six months. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Chinese golfer Li Haotong in the final round of the Dubai Desert Classic. He was penalised two shots at the last hole as his caddie moved to the side after he took his stance for a putt. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

R&A defends Li’s penalty, Tour calls for relook

DUBAI • The R&A has defended a new golf rule that cost China’s Li Haotong a two-stroke penalty at the final hole of the Dubai Desert Classic last Sunday. Caddies are no longer allowed to stand directly behind their players and help with alignment, one of a raft of changes made to the Rules of Golf on Jan 1. The rule 10.2b (4) states: “Once the player begins taking a stance for the stroke, and until the stroke is made, the player’s caddie must not deliberately stand on or close to an extension of the line of play

behind the ball for any reason.” The 23-year-old Li was penalised when his caddie Mike Burrow, who had been standing behind him, moved to the side as he started to take his stance for a putt. The penalty turned a birdie into a bogey and cost the defending champion over €80,000 (\$\$123,500) in prize money as he dropped into a tie for 12th instead of joint-third. European Tour chief executive officer Keith Pelley even called for a reassessment of the new rule. “Let me state initially that, under the new Rules of Golf... the decision

made by our referees was correct,” he said. “It is my strong belief, however, that the fact there is no discretion available to our referees when implementing rulings such as this is wrong.” On Monday, Martin Slumbers, chief executive of R&A, which runs the sport worldwide along with the United States Golf Association, defended the lack of a “discretionary element” to the rule. “There has been some misunderstanding of the new rule and I would point out that it is designed to prevent any opportunity for the

caddie to stand behind the player as he begins to take his stance,” he said. “We appreciate it was a very unfortunate situation and I completely understand Keith Pelley’s concerns. “But there is no discretionary element to the rule precisely so that it is easier to understand and can be applied consistently.” The controversy caused a stir, with a number of players taking to Twitter to defend Li. Irish veteran Paul McGinley posted: “This is so ridiculously mar-

ginal. The player should be given the benefit of the doubt. The rule changes are largely about the spirit of the game & player integrity not this pedantic-ness (sic).” Spain’s Pablo Larrazabal also tweeted his support. “The R&A and USGA have to check those new 2019 golf rules... my Chinese brother didn’t deserve that penalty on the 72nd... the line is too thin,” he said. REUTERS

Next 48 Hours

TODAY

BASKETBALL

ABL HK Eastern v Saigon Heat (StarHub Ch201), CLS Knights v Malaysia Dragons (Ch202) – 8pm.

FOOTBALL

English Premier League Liverpool v Leicester (Singtel TV Ch102 & StarHub Ch227), Tottenham v Watford (Ch104 & Ch229) – tomorrow, 4am. Bournemouth v Chelsea (Ch103 & Ch228), Southampton v Palace (Ch105 & Ch230) – tomorrow, 3.35am.

TOMORROW

CRICKET

4th ODI NZ v India (Singtel TV Ch123 & StarHub Ch236, 10am).

GOLF

European Tour Saudi International: Day 1 (StarHub Ch204, 4pm & 7.30pm).

For latest updates, go to singtelv.com.sg & starhubgo.com or check the on-screen TV guide.

A Game of Two Halves

David Lee and Rohit Brijnath discuss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, the Australian Open and Singapore Bowling’s bold move. <http://str.sg/oLzW>



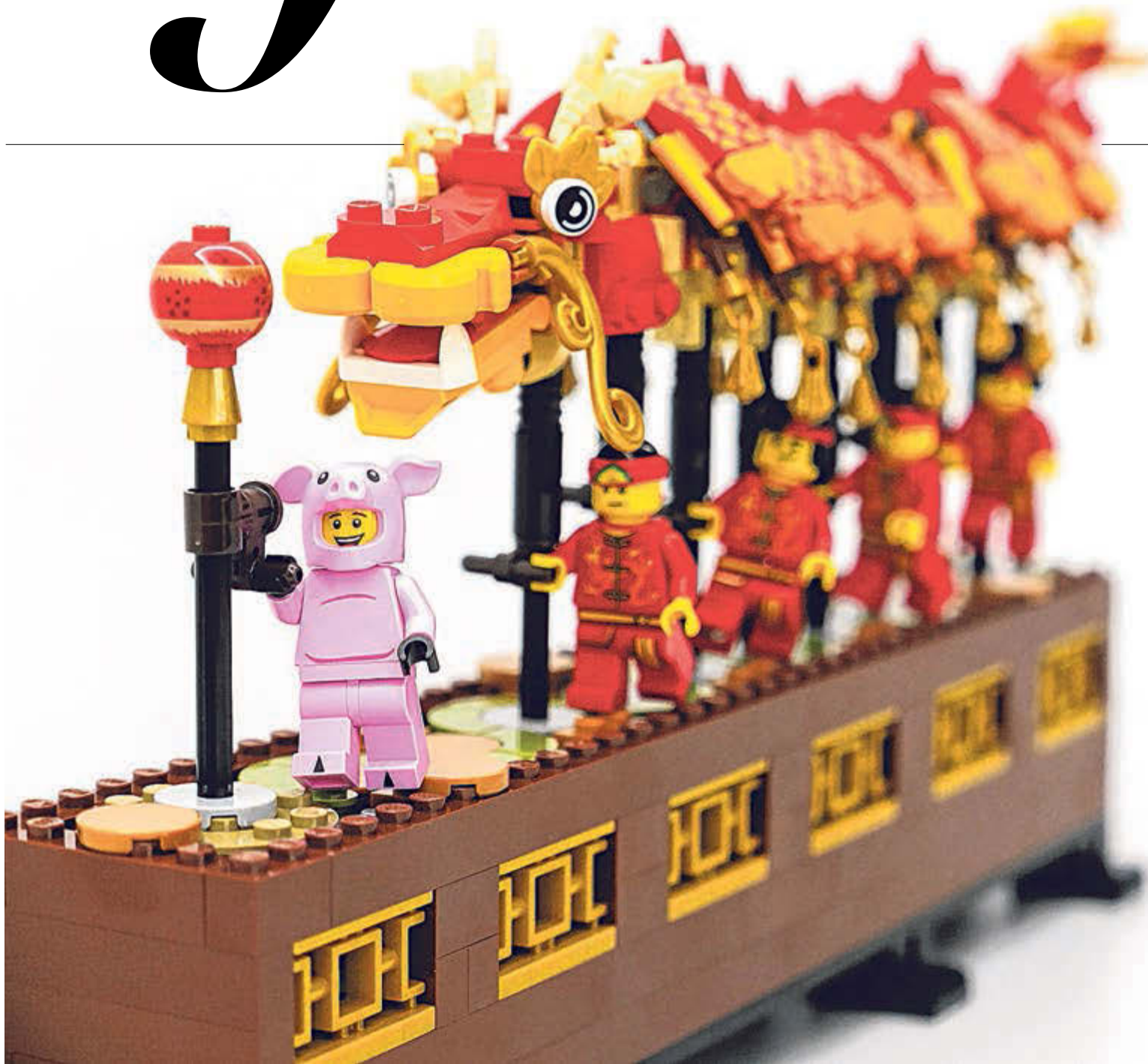
life

D **GOODBYE ARASHI?**
End of J-pop's
golden era
D7

The biggest
adventure you can take
is to live the life of
your dreams.

— Oprah Winfrey

Live more.
Pant less. 



Tech tech chiang

Amp up the fun over Chinese New Year with themed Lego sets and an automated mahjong table.

Vincent Chang and **Trevor Tan**
pick out gadgets and games for
the festive season.

D2&3

DESIGN: PETER WILLIAMS PHOTO: TREVOR TAN



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LG V40^{ThinQ}

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lg.com/sg

8 picks for CNY

Vincent Chang and Trevor Tan round up a list of devices and apps to up the fun factor when visiting or hosting guests during the festive period



1
LEGO CHINESE NEW YEAR-THEMED SETS, FROM \$84.90

Bond with the family while building two new Chinese New Year-themed sets from Lego. It is the first time that the company is launching region-exclusive sets to

celebrate the festive season. The first one is the CNY reunion dinner set (\$89.90, above), with six family members gathered around a rotating dining table filled with

food. Auspicious decorations dot the Lego house to enhance the festive mood. The second one is the Dragon Dance set (\$84.90), featuring a

team holding up the dragon, which is chasing a Lego figurine dressed in a pig costume. Turn a handle to make the dragon's body move up and down.

PHOTOS: LEGO, ECOVACS, THECODINGMONKEYS, BETTERAIR, PHILIPS, POPSICAL, TURBO, EIGHT & CRATE

2
ECOVACS WINBOT X, \$629
Let the Ecovacs Winbot X clean your windows while you get the rest of your home spick and span. This battery-powered, window-cleaning robot is cordless, which lets it clean hard-to-reach areas. Activate its deep-cleaning mode to have the robot go over the same area twice using two paths to ensure no spot is missed. A safety tether provides extra peace of mind. It is always monitoring the robot's connection to the glass and will sound an alarm if there is a loss in air pressure that would make the robot lose its grip and fall off.



3
BOARD-GAME MOBILE APPS
Playing card games may be a Chinese New Year tradition, but why not shake things up with fun board games suitable for all ages? Many of these board games have been adapted into mobile apps, so all you need to take along while visiting relatives is an iPad or a smartphone. The apps also handle all the tedious stuff, such as calculating points or reminding players of the rules. For starters, try Carcassonne (right, \$6.98 for Android and \$14.98 for iOS), a classic tile-placement game that is easy to learn. Ticket To Ride (\$6.98 for iOS and Android) is also worth checking out. Both are pass-and-play games – buy them on a single device and everyone can play by passing around the device.



4
BETTERAIR BIOTICA800, \$499, AVAILABLE AT COURTS SINGAPORE

If you are worried about the poor air quality in your house because of the constant stream of visitors during Chinese New Year, use an air purifier, such as the BetterAir Biotica800. Large enough to provide coverage for a four-room HDB flat,

this plug-and-play portable air purifier works by releasing "environmental probiotics" into the air. These probiotics are said to improve indoor air quality and prolong the cleanliness of indoor surfaces by consuming resources that harmful bacteria need to thrive, such as dust-mite excrement, pollen, pet dander and shed skin cells. In addition, odours are also eliminated.

5
TURBO TIH2013 INDUCTION COOKER, \$159

Why get an electric steamboat that you use only once a year when you can get an induction cooker like the Turbo TIH2013, which can do the same job and also be used for regular cooking? Just place an induction-compatible stainless steel pot on this sleek cooker to whip up a steamboat meal. The TIH2013 has 10 levels of temperature control, allowing you to dial up the temperature for shabu shabu and reduce the heat when preparing soup bases. The cooker also comes with a three-hour digital timer, in case you forget to switch it off.



6

POPSICAL TV, \$249

Popsical TV is a small streaming device which works with your existing home karaoke gear – such as microphones, a television set and sound system – and connects over the Internet to an extensive, regularly updated library of more than 200,000 songs in 14 languages.

Users can download the Popsical mobile app to their smartphones to select their songs or remotely control the Popsical TV device.

Accessing the song library for unlimited use requires a monthly subscription of \$9.99.

For a one-off karaoke session, Popsical has a 24-hour pass for all the songs at \$3.99.



7

PHILIPS AVANCE COLLECTION INDOOR GRILL, \$499

For those who prefer to grill their food over the usual steamboat reunion dinner, check out the Philips Avance Collection Indoor Grill that does the job with virtually no smoke.

It uses advanced infrared technology and special reflectors to guide the heat towards the grid to grill the food evenly, while leaving the grease tray cold enough to minimise unpleasant smoke and grease spatter.

When you are done grilling, keep your food warm with the Keep Warm setting.



8

AUTOMATED MAHJONG TABLE, FROM \$999, AVAILABLE FROM QOO10 (bit.ly/2WrrhMj)

It has become a Chinese New Year tradition of sorts to gather for a few rounds of mahjong.

To speed up the games, get an au-

tomated mahjong table.

It automates the shuffling and assembling of tiles. Press a button at the centre of the table and an opening will appear.

Push all the tiles into this opening and press a button to close it.

Within seconds, the tiles will be shuffled and formed in front of the players in the usual four rows.

Do-it-yourself popiah and a classic remastered

Tune in to ST podcast Life Picks, in which Life reporters highlight the best films, concerts, restaurants and arts events.

This week, Life reporters Olivia Ho, Yip Wai Yee and Eunice Quek chat with host Melissa Sim about interactive art at the Digimuse exhibition at the National Museum of Singapore, do-it-yourself popiah at Peranakan restaurant Folklore and a remastered version of the classic movie, Schindler's List.



Life writers (from left) Olivia Ho, Yip Wai Yee, Eunice Quek and Melissa Sim talk about interactive art at the Digimuse exhibition at the National Museum of Singapore. ST PHOTO: EUNICE QUEK



Piggy pineapple tarts shot with an Apple iPhone XS Max using Portrait Mode. ST PHOTO: TREVOR TAN

Capturing festive moments with your smartphone

Trevor Tan

Chinese New Year is just around the corner.

Whether it is having reunion dinners, visiting relatives or renewing acquaintances, there will be great moments you want to capture with your smartphone.

Here are handy tips for taking “Instagrammable” shots.

PHOTOGRAPHING FOOD

- Do not just point and shoot. Take time to reposition a dish or shift its ingredients – in a hygienic way, of course – to show the focus of the dish. For example, with siew yoke, or roast pork belly, make sure you get the layers of the roast meat to front the photo.
- Find a clean background. If the dish is to “pop” in the photo, you need a background that does not distract. If you want a dish to stand out, move away other dishes for a clutter-free backdrop.
- Keep it simple. Unless you are a professional food stylist, taking a single photo of multiple dishes will always be a challenge. Do not try to fit more than two dishes into a shot, so you can

style them easily.

- Experiment with different angles. Some dishes such as steamboat tend to look better when shot from the top, while others such as fried chicken might look tastier when photographed from the side.
- Use the depth-of-field or bokeh mode when taking close-ups of dishes. Blurring the background allows the viewer to focus on a main subject. This is especially helpful when photographing dishes of similar items, such as a plate of pineapple tarts.

PHOTOGRAPHING PEOPLE

- Take along a selfie stick. It allows you to easily take photos of yourself from a higher angle so you can avoid the dreaded double-chin in your photos. In addition, some selfie sticks such as the Xiaomi Wireless Selfie Kit (\$38) double as a tripod for group photos.
- Use the portrait mode when photographing one person. It blurs the background and lets your subject stand out. With smartphones such as the Apple iPhone XS and the Huawei Mate 20 Pro, you can change the aperture after taking the picture

to adjust the background blur to your liking.

- Take advantage of lighting. Make use of whatever light is available. For instance, I like to have my subjects by the window as it provides natural light at an angle. The resulting portraits usually look more dynamic.
- Capture emotions. As a smartphone is not as intrusive as a DSLR camera, people are usually more relaxed and tend to be more natural when being photographed. Look out for candid moments to capture that priceless expression.
- Position your subjects for group photos. Often, group shots during Chinese New Year gatherings tend to look like “firing squad” photos, as everyone is lined up in a straight line facing the camera. Position your subjects at various points within the frame, with them facing different directions. For a family photo, a grandparent can, for example, sit in the middle of the sofa facing at a 45-degree angle outwards, while the taller ones stand behind the sofa as the others sit on the sofa’s hand rests. Make sure everyone is looking at the camera when you take the shot.

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Phones

A hole new design

Kicking off a phone design trend, the Honor View20's front-facing camera sits in a hole-punch display at the screen's left corner

Vincent Chang

The Honor View20 is the bellwether for how this year's crop of smartphones will look. The flagship device from Honor, the sub-brand of Chinese smartphone-maker Huawei, was launched here last Thursday.

It has a hole-punch display – the left corner of the screen has a circular display cutout to accommodate the front-facing camera.

This alternative to the display notch popularised by the Apple iPhone X is expected to appear in many smartphones this year, including Samsung's upcoming Galaxy S10 series.

Like the display notch, I soon got used to the hole-punch cutout. It resides quietly at the corner like other icons in the status bar.

It is probably less intrusive than the notch while watching videos or playing games in landscape orientation because my left hand will likely be covering that corner anyway while holding the phone.

In fact, I was more annoyed that Honor has placed its headphone jack at the same top-left corner as the hole-punch. This means that the headphone cord gets in my way when I use the View20 in landscape mode.

YouTube videos expand to fill the space around the hole-punch camera, while the Netflix app adds its own black bars at the sides of the screen to work around it.

And if the hole-punch bothers

THE STRAITS TIMES
TECH
EDITOR'S CHOICE

you, the View20 has a setting that enables a black bar at the top to conceal it.

The display itself is surrounded by narrow bezels, with the bottom chin slightly thicker than the rest. This 6.4-inch LCD screen offers good, vibrant colours.

Its 2,310 x 1,080-pixel resolution is just about sharp enough that you won't see any jagged edges while reading text. The screen is also bright enough – barely – to be used outdoors on a sunny afternoon.

Its other noteworthy feature is the 48-megapixel (MP) rear camera, which uses Sony's latest IMX586 image sensor to take photos of 8,000 x 6,000 pixels.

Although this sensor has a relatively small pixel size of 0.8 microns – leading to more noise – compared with 1.4 microns in Samsung's and Google's top models, Sony says the camera can combine the data from adjacent pixels to effectively act like a 12MP camera with a 1.6-micron sensor.

In other words, you should probably use the camera at its default 12MP resolution for best results. These photos look excellent – sharp with good contrast and little noise. Photos at 48MP resolution are usable, of course, but pack more noise than their 12MP versions.

But Honor has also added its own twist by tapping the artificial intelligence (AI) prowess of the View20's Kirin 980 processor – the same chip in Huawei's flagship Mate 20 series – to merge multiple 48MP shots in real time to create an ultra-

sharp 48MP photo.

Dubbed AI Ultra Clarity, this shooting mode creates high-resolutions photos that effectively allow you to zoom in to look at the captured details, sort of like shooting through a telephoto lens that is missing in the View20.

While I was unable to test this feature in depth – the firmware update did not arrive in time for the review – I did manage to get a short hands-on with this mode and came away impressed with the level of clarity in the composite 48MP image.

It works best without any moving objects because, like a long-exposure shot, you basically have to hold the smartphone steady while it takes multiple shots of the scene.

Speaking of which, the View20 has a night mode that requires you to hold the phone still for a few seconds. Photos generally turned out brighter in this mode compared with the default Auto mode, though there were instances where I preferred the photo taken in Auto because the colours looked more natural.

Another feature that I could not test, pending a software update, is its secondary time-of-flight camera, which uses light to map a distant object in 3D. Honor says it can be used to scan objects and re-shape the body of an object, like giving a person thinner legs. This body-shaping function is in the camera app, which I tried in a demo. But I don't see myself using it after the novelty wears off.

Like most smartphones these days, the View20 has glass at its front and back. But Honor has imbued the glass back with a striking V-shaped chevron pattern while the edges of the back also exhibit a gradient effect. This holographic-like look will divide opinions.



SPECS

PRICE: \$829
PROCESSOR: Kirin 980 (dual-core 2.6GHz, dual-core 1.92GHz, quad-core 1.8GHz)
DISPLAY: 6.4-inch, IPS LCD, 2,310 x 1,080 pixels, 398 ppi pixel density
OPERATING SYSTEM: Magic UI 2 (Android 9.0)
MEMORY: 256GB, 8GB RAM
REAR CAMERA: 48MP (f/1.8), time-of-flight (TOF) 3-D camera
FRONT CAMERA: 25MP (f/2.0)
BATTERY: Non-removable 4,000mAh battery

RATING

FEATURES: 4/5
DESIGN: 4/5
PERFORMANCE: 4.5/5
VALUE FOR MONEY: 4.5/5
BATTERY LIFE: 4/5
OVERALL: 4.5/5

It lacks wireless charging, though its fast-charging technology more than makes up for it by fully charging the device in slightly over an hour.

There is also no waterproofing, which is common among high-end phones. Neither does it have an SD card slot.

Its mobile operating system is based on Android 9, but has its own user interface, dubbed Magic UI, on top. It feels smooth and fast, thanks to the powerful Kirin 980 processor and the 8GB system memory on my review set.

Currently, Magic UI is near-identical to Huawei's EMUI software – the only difference I noticed is that it brings up the Google Feed page instead of Huawei's own HiBoard feed when I swipe right at the home screen. Honor says it plans to further differentiate Magic UI to appeal to younger users.

Given its 4,000mAh battery, I

was expecting better battery life from the View20. While it will easily last an entire day and more, its stamina of 12hr 15min in our video-loop battery test is good but not outstanding.

My review set (8GB of memory and 256GB storage) is priced at \$829, which makes it more affordable than top smartphones, including Huawei's flagship models. More importantly, it stacks up well against rival models from Xiaomi and OnePlus.

Honor also sells a cheaper variant with 6GB memory and 128GB storage at \$699.

• **Verdict: The hole-punch display design trend is on a roll with the Honor View20, which marries excellent performance with an impressive rear camera. It also offers great value for money.**

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PC

Redesigned Spectre big on privacy

Vincent Chang

One could say the term “cutting edge” applies to the HP Spectre x360.

The bottom corners at the back of this convertible laptop have been sliced off while its sides are not flat, but angular. The edges though, are not actually uncomfortable to touch, despite looking rather sharp.

Launched late last year, the latest Spectre laptops are premium, high-end models. The x360 variant switches between tablet and laptop forms and is available in 13.3- and 15.6-inch sizes.

My 13.3-inch review set weighs in at around 1.3kg. Its redesigned matt aluminium chassis now comes in a dark blue shade that shows up fingerprints and other smudges prominently. The dark copper accents of previous models have been replaced by pale brass flourishes.

As for the cut-off corners, the idea here is to improve cable management. Located at the right cut-off corner is a USB Type-C Thunderbolt 3 port for charging. Thus, the power cord extends from this corner to the electrical outlet at an angle and does not get in the way of plugged-in devices or accessories at the side.

The power button, which took me a while to find, is located at the other cut-off corner. It lacks an HDMI port, with a second Thunderbolt 3 port available for display output, though most monitors will require a dongle, which is helpfully included in the package.

But I was pleased to find a full-size USB Type-A port. It meant I did not need a dongle to transfer files from my USB hard drive.

HP is doubling down on privacy with the latest Spectre x360. There is a physical switch at the side for the front-facing camera. Toggle it to enable or disable the camera – a camera icon appears momentarily to indicate the status of the camera.

In addition, it comes with HP's Sureview privacy screen, which obscures the contents of the display from nosy neighbours. Pressing the F1 key turns on the privacy mode – the screen appears opaque from the sides and is visible only to those directly in front of it.

However, its glossy display is very



reflective. Even at maximum brightness, which is rated at an average 300 nits, the display is not the easiest to read off.

The keyboard has more depth than I expected, given the Spectre's thin chassis. The Function keys, by default, trigger important functions such as the keyboard backlight, screen brightness and multimedia controls.

You can log into the Spectre using either your fingerprint or through facial recognition. I prefer the fingerprint method, though HP has improved the field of view for the front infrared camera used to recognise faces. I can be located slightly to one side of the screen and the camera is still able to detect my presence, recognise my facial features and log into my account.

Along with the new design is a new Intel Core i7-8565U processor that slightly improves on the general performance of the previous model. In the PCMark 10 system benchmark, the Spectre scored 4,215 compared with the Lenovo ThinkPad X1 Carbon (3,970), which is powered by the older i7-8550U chip.

The new chip is also more power-efficient. The Spectre lasted 8hr 40min in our video-loop battery test with the screen set at maximum brightness.

• **Verdict: The latest Spectre is redesigned to improve privacy and cable management.**

SPECS

PRICE: \$2,799
PROCESSOR: Intel Core i7-8565U (1.8GHz)
GRAPHICS: Intel UHD Graphics 620
RAM: 16GB DDR4
SCREEN SIZE: 13.3 inches, 1,920 x 1,080 pixels
CONNECTIVITY: 2x USB Type-C Thunderbolt 3, USB 3.1 Gen 2 Type-A, microSD card slot, audio jack
BATTERY: 61 watt-hour

RATING

FEATURES: 4/5
DESIGN: 4.5/5
PERFORMANCE: 4/5
VALUE FOR MONEY: 3/5
BATTERY LIFE: 5/5
OVERALL: 4/5



Mesh router affordable, easy to use

Vincent Chang

D-Link's latest whole-home Wi-Fi system, the Covr-2202, comes with three wireless bands, up from the two bands of the previous Covr-1203 model.

Also known as mesh routers, whole-home Wi-Fi systems rely on multiple connected devices to extend the Wi-Fi network range, eliminating Wi-Fi blind spots.

The Covr-2202 consists of two units. One is labelled “A” and should be connected to the Internet modem via Ethernet cable. Both units are pre-paired out of the box, which makes them easy to set up.

If you need a third Covr unit, you have to configure it by connecting it to the “A” unit via an Ethernet cable. This is slightly tricky compared with other mesh routers, which add units wirelessly. Connecting with an Ethernet cable means you will need both units to be in close proximity and have two electrical outlets nearby.

In most cases, though, you will not need a third unit because D-Link says two Covr units provide up to 6,000 sq ft of wireless coverage.

With its tower chassis, the Covr-2202 is much taller than the compact dual-band Covr-1203. But

like the older model, each unit has only two Ethernet ports and lacks a USB port for connecting to an external hard drive or printer.

The Covr logo is backlit and serves as a status indicator. It is bright enough that I would recommend disabling the LED in the settings, especially if the router is placed in the bedroom.

Like most tri-band mesh routers, the third wireless band on the Covr-2202 is reserved for communication between the units. This feature, also known as a dedicated backhaul, usually leads to better performance compared with routers without it.

There is also an option to use Ethernet cables for backhaul communication, freeing up the wireless band for clients.

In my usual test with two laptops in the living room with the Covr-2202, the router achieved an average download speed of 379Mbps.

This is significantly faster than the 246Mbps managed by the dual-band Covr-1203 model.

The result also fares well against other mesh routers in the market, which typically perform in the 300 to 400Mbps range.

However, the Covr-2202 did not perform as well when I moved one of the laptops to the farthest bed-

room. The average download speed dropped to 100Mbps.

In comparison, the Synology MR2200ac that I tested recently managed 120Mbps while the Linksys Velop (tri-band version) clocked 183Mbps.

To start the installation of the Covr-2202, scan the QR code in the package with the D-Link Wi-Fi mobile app (for iOS and Android). This app lets you configure basic router features, such as guest networks and parental controls. D-Link also offers a browser interface to control the Covr's settings.

Overall, the Covr-2202 has the essential features of a router – such as quality of service and port forwarding – and does not overwhelm users with obscure, advanced features and settings.

D-Link plans to add security features to the router via a firmware update in the second quarter.

Powered by McAfee, the free Secure Home platform claims to protect client devices connected to the router by detecting anomalies in the network and blocking malicious websites. It will also provide a set of parental controls.

• **Verdict: Reasonably priced for a tri-band mesh router, the D-Link is easy to set up and has a clean user interface.**

Photos

Swinging 360-degree views

The Insta360 One X comes with an app that makes editing photos and videos a breeze

Trevor Tan

The Insta360 One X is a 360-degree action camera that can shoot 5.7K 360-degree videos at up to 30 frames per second (fps) and 18-megapixel 360-degree still images.

Like most 360-degree cameras, the One X features a candy-bar design with a fish-eye lens at the front and back.

At the front, it has a circular display with two round buttons below it. The smaller button is the power/mode button while the bigger one is the recording button.

On one side of the camera is a micro-USB port for charging and image transfer. On the other is a compartment for holding the battery. At the bottom of the camera, there is a microSD card slot and a tripod mount.

Three cables – with micro-USB to Lightning, micro-USB to USB-C and micro-USB to micro-USB connection types – are included in the package.

The cables allow for faster transfer of the stills and footage from camera to smartphone via the Insta360 One X app, which is available for Android and iOS. I tested the iOS version.

You can also transfer content via a Wi-Fi connection.

While the wireless mode is slower, I found it faster than other 360-degree cameras that I have tried.

The One X app is easily the best that I have used for a 360-degree camera. It provides easy-to-use editing tools that let you create videos with plenty of effects, such as timeshift, bullet time and many more.

When it comes to capturing footage, I find the One X works best with its own selfie stick. Called the Hidden Selfie Stick, it is designed to avoid the “chopped hand” phenom-



PHOTOS: INSTA360



enon found in other 360-degree cameras.

In the 360-degree footage I shot using the Hidden Selfie Stick, all I see is my hand and not the selfie stick. I highly recommend buying it.

Another accessory I recommend is the Insta360 bullet-time handle. It has two mounts – a standard top mount and a side rotating mount for attaching the Hidden Selfie Stick.

Here is how bullet-time works: Attach the One X to the selfie stick and the latter to the bullet-time handle. You can now swing the One X horizontally, in a circular motion.

Select the Bullet Time mode in the app and start “swinging” the camera above your head. You can adjust the speed of the rotation. The result is an amazing Matrix-like effect.

Like some 360-degree cameras, the best thing about the One X is not necessarily its 360-degree output, but its ability to transform a 360-degree video into a 2D video with different angles that simulate multiple camera set-ups.

The One X app lets you easily

THE STRAITS TIMES TECH EDITOR'S CHOICE

choose which angle to use at a certain time of the footage and mix the angles to create a video clip that looks like it has been shot with multiple cameras. You can also speed up segments if you find them too boring or to create a sense of speed. And the app allows you to track yourself and other subjects.

It is also easy to edit footage using the app.

The app has tutorials on how to use the One X to shoot in various creative ways. Among them is the “little planet” mode in which the surroundings exist as a bubble landscape around the user.

You can also learn how to create a simulated drone shot with the camera. Even newbies will figure out how to do it in no time. In fact, you will have plenty of fun experimenting with the One X.

Most importantly, the 360-

degree photos and videos are superb with great sharpness and fantastic details. The image stabilisation is equally stellar, with footage looking at times like they were shot with a dolly.

I did not see stitch lines – a common flaw in many 360-degree cameras – in outdoor shots. It was only in some indoor settings that the multiple reflections caused by different artificial lights revealed the stitch lines.

On the downside, it is not water-resistant unless you get its optional case. Another slight quirk is the sometimes-iffy Wi-Fi connection between the camera and the app. But it is not something a quick restart of the camera cannot fix.

The battery life is average for a 360-degree camera, at around 60 minutes of video recording with a full charge.

• **Verdict:** With its superb image quality and intuitive app, the Insta360 One X is simply the best 360-degree action camera that you can get right now.

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SPECS

PRICE: \$599 (camera only) or \$669 (includes bullet-time handle and Hidden Selfie Stick, available at apple.com/sg)
IMAGE SENSOR: 18-megapixel 1/2.3-inch CMOS
LENS: 2 x 200-degree fish-eye
SENSITIVITY: ISO 100 to 3,200
CONNECTIVITY: Bluetooth, Wi-Fi
WEIGHT: 115g (with battery)

RATING

FEATURES: 5/5
DESIGN: 4/5
PERFORMANCE: 5/5
BATTERY LIFE: 3/5
VALUE FOR MONEY: 4/5
OVERALL: 4.5/5

In sharp focus

Trevor Tan



PHOTO: SIGMA PHOTO

Available for Sigma, Nikon and Canon (the version tested) DSLR cameras, the Sigma 70-200mm f/2.8 DG OS HSM Sports lens delivers what most photographers need in a telephoto lens, especially with its constant large aperture of f/2.8 throughout its focal range.

It features a dust- and splash-proof structure consisting of a magnesium-alloy barrel and a coated brass mounting. Its front and rear lens elements are said to have water- and oil-repellent coatings for increased protection.

The lens’ build is sturdy, giving users plenty of confidence when handling it. While I did not dunk it in water or throw sand at it, it did get caught in a bout of torrential rain during the review and came through unscathed.

The lens has 24 glass elements – including 10 low-dispersion glasses – arranged in 22 groups with 11 rounded aperture blades.

On the outside, the lens has two control rings – one for zooming and the other for focusing.

I am a tad perplexed by their positioning though, as the zoom ring is close to the front of the lens while the focusing ring is in the mid-section.

Zoom rings are usually placed at the mid-section of lenses for better centre of gravity when holding the lens. While this is not a deal-breaker, it is certainly something you will need to get used to.

There are three Focus Hold buttons positioned between the two control rings, around the circumference of the barrel. On the left side of the barrel are four switches for changing from autofocus (AF) to manual focusing mode, limiting the focusing distance, toggling

through image-stabilisation modes and selecting custom functions.

For this review, I used the lens with my trusty Canon EOS 7D.

The AF performance was superb, with almost-instant focus lock under bright sunlight. Even under dim lighting conditions, focus lock took at most one second.

The performance of the optics is equally stellar. Images shot using this lens generally looked sharp with minimal image distortion and negligible chromatic aberration throughout its entire focal range.

At the 70mm focal length, edge-to-edge sharpness was outstanding from f/2.8 to f/11. Only at f/16 did the edge sharpness decline slightly, but the centre sharpness was consistent through the aperture range.

From 100mm onwards, I saw some edge softness from f/2.8 to f/5.6. It was only at f/11 that the edge sharpness improves to become comparable with what I saw at 70mm.

Centre sharpness was great from 100mm onwards and across all apertures, albeit not as sharp as at 70mm.

In terms of pricing, the Sigma lens is much more competitive compared with the equivalent original DSLR camera lenses. For example, the latest Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS II USM telephoto lens is priced at \$3,499, about \$1,400 more than the Sigma.

The only downer is that the Sigma lens is slightly heavier by 320g compared with the original Canon telephoto lens mentioned. Guess that is the price to pay for its sturdiness.

• **Verdict:** For those looking for a fast telephoto lens, you will not go wrong with the Sigma 70-200mm f/2.8 DG OS HSM Sports.

SPECS

PRICE: \$2,088 (Sigma-mount; Nikon-mount; Canon-mount, version tested)
FOCAL LENGTH: 70mm to 200mm
MAXIMUM APERTURE: f/2.8
MINIMUM APERTURE: f/22
MINIMUM FOCUSING DISTANCE: 120cm
WEIGHT: 1.8kg

RATING

DESIGN: 4/5
PERFORMANCE: 4/5
VALUE FOR MONEY: 4/5
OVERALL: 4/5

Gaming

Bonus contents, updated graphics in Vesperia

Nizam Mohd

Tales Of Vesperia Definitive Edition, the new remaster of the decade-old Japanese role-playing game Tales Of Vesperia, brings back fond memories.

Allow me to explain. When the series debuted in 2008, I invested many hours playing its Xbox 360 version, so much so that I skipped the Japanese-exclusive release in 2009 on PS3, which offered two additional playable characters. The Definitive Edition includes that content and also comes with updated graphics. The PS4 version offers 1080p with 60 frames per second (note that there is no further resolution enhancement if you play this on a PS4 Pro, unless there is a patch in future), while the Windows version offers near 4K quality.

However, even the PS4 version looks great and its resolution is definitely adequate, given the game’s anime-styled cel-shaded graphics format.

Developer Bandai Namco has also updated the game’s soundtrack with new songs. Fans should get the Premium Edition, as it comes with a four-CD compilation of music (available only with the PS4 version).

The two playable characters that I have been looking forward to are Flynn Scifo and Patty Fleur. When I played the Xbox 360 version of the game in the past, Flynn was an indirectly influential persona accessible on only special encounters. But because of his popularity with gamers, Bandai Namco made him a selectable playing character in the PS3 port.

Patty is a young girl pirate with an attitude. Once she joins your party, you will be exposed to additional side quests that provide much backstory to the events that occur in the game world. Be sure to recruit her into your party.



PHOTO: BANDAI NAMCO ENTERTAINMENT

The Definitive Edition also introduces more mini-games and bosses as well as unreleased costumes through its bonus content. Sweetening the deal further are two sets of free content available on PlayStation Network Store that contains a generous amount of customisation features for the playable characters. Being able to switch up to four different costumes for each character is refreshing, especially when you are going to spend hours playing.

I recommend players save their progress whenever they come across the sporadically located save points. Once the entire party perishes, it is game over.

Some of the additional scenes come with voice-casting. When you launch the game, the system requires you to select Japanese or English audio. However, there is no option to change the selection again unless you reload the game. Speaking of which, Troy Baker, the original voice for the game’s main protagonist Yuri Lowell, has been replaced by American voice actor Grant George in the additional scenes.

But I found almost no difference

between their voices and the change should not affect the gameplay experience for players.

My one quibble is a button-mapping issue on the main menu of PlayStation titles. The menu says “Press X” to start the game, but the correct button to press is actually the “O”, or circle, button.

• **Verdict:** Tales Of Vesperia Definitive Edition is a worthy tour down memory lane for fans.

• Nizam Mohd is a freelance writer

SPECS

RATING: 8/10
PRICE: From S\$79.90 (PC; Nintendo Switch; Xbox One; PS4, version tested)
GENRE: Japanese role-playing game

Tech life hacks

12 cybertips for Year of the Pig

Keep your money and identity safe from hackers this festive season with these handy tips



Raju Chellam

As we welcome the Year of the Pig, don't count on hackers to be lazy. Instead, expect them to double down on finding new ways to reap unearned rewards.

According to a Singapore Police study, as much as \$113 million was lost to scams in just the first nine months of last year. That includes scammers professing their love online (457 people lost \$18.1 million); charlatans impersonating government officials (346 cases, \$9.4 million cheated); illegal moneylenders (713 people conned of \$1.4 million); and e-commerce cheats (1,881 cases, 80 per cent of them through Carousell, with \$1.5 million losses).

Since the pig is the 12th animal in the Chinese zodiac, here are 12 tips – in alphabetical order – to safeguard your money and identity especially while shopping online this festive season.

1

Automate

Turn on the "Automatic" feature for system updates on your laptop and mobile devices. Ensure your Web browser installs automatic security updates and that browser plug-ins such as Java, Flash and anti-virus tools are automatically updated.

2

Beware, browse and backup

Beware of websites that are misspelled or have the "s" missing in "https". Https, or Hyper Text Transfer Protocol Secure, is an indication that communication between your browser and the

website is encrypted. Browse using your home or office Wi-Fi network and beware the risks of shopping online using free public Wi-Fi networks with lax security. Also, back up your data regularly, such as once a week, to an external hard drive at home.

3

Clicking and crime

Social media is a hotbed of hackers. Criminals love newbies and novices, young children and teens, lonely hearts and those looking for love online. Don't share details about your life online, especially where you work, which school you attend and where and when you are going on vacation. These are clear clues for criminals to stalk you or decide on an opportune moment to carry out an attack.

4

Devices and data

Your mobile device is your Achilles' heel. Use this six-step method, which can be easily remembered by the mnemonic "Pitbus", to safeguard it: Create a complex Passcode or Pattern for locking and unlocking your device; Install apps only from trusted sources; Track or find your phone using the tracking feature on your iPhone or Android Device Manager; Back-up your data on a cloud; Update your device with the latest security patches and latest versions of apps; and don't send Sensitive information as text or e-mail messages from your mobile phone.

5

Encrypt

If you are paranoid about e-mail security and want to send encrypted e-mail, there are a bunch of e-mail service providers that offer this option. One is Proton mail (<https://protonmail.com>), a secure e-mail service based in Switzerland. It runs on Android and iOS devices and is also available on the Web. It offers free and paid services for individual users and companies.

6

Factor of two

Two-factor authentication, or 2FA, adds more layers of security to your password or passcode. Banking and e-commerce sites require 2FA for access. You can also set up 2FA on other apps. For instance, if you turn on 2FA on Gmail, you will be required to enter an automated Google-generated passcode and your own password or passcode to access your e-mail under certain circumstances.

7

Gatekeepers

Install a good firewall and anti-virus software on all of your devices. Having an anti-virus tool on your device will keep malware away, while firewalls help screen out hackers, viruses and other malware. Windows and Mac OS X offer their own firewalls. Your router should also have a firewall

built in to prevent attacks on your network.

8

Hijack

Hackers can hijack your device – and you. One way to prevent that is by using a virtual private network (VPN) service, which encrypts the traffic between your device and the VPN server, adding a layer of complexity that makes it tough for hackers to get to your data. There are free VPN services, though they may not be as effective as paid ones.

9

Identity

Your personally identifiable information or PII – name, address, phone numbers, birth data and location details – is a goldmine for identity thieves. Review what you have revealed about yourself on social media sites, especially Facebook, and tighten your privacy settings.

10

Juxtapasswords

Many sensitive websites and apps allow you to set passwords that are up to 64 characters long, but most people stick to simple passwords that are easy to hack. Three tips: First, create a password that contains two uppercase letters, three lowercase letters, four numbers and three symbols, but not the symbols "&", "@", "%" and "#" as they are very commonly

used. Second, reset your password at least once every three months. Third, never use the same password again.

11

Keep your friends close; keep your enemies closer

That's a line from Mario Puzo's 1969 novel The Godfather. However, you don't quite know who your friend or enemy is online. The best bet is to keep everyone at a distance, especially when it comes to opening suspicious attachments and e-mail, clicking on uncertain links or giving your personal information on unknown websites.

12

Lock and leave

Lock your devices, virtually and physically. Even if you are away from your desk for a short while at your workplace, shut the laptop lid and ensure it requires a password to log on. Take your phone everywhere you go, including to the toilet. The germs on your phone can be wiped clean, but the data on your phone can wipe you clean.

stlife@sph.com.sg

• This column kickstarts ST Tech's weekly take on all tech matters relating to cyber security, humour, parenting and current affairs.

• Raju Chellam is the author of Organ Gold, published by the Straits Times Press, on the illegal trade in human organs on the Dark Web.

Exclusively for The Straits Times subscribers

Win a trip for two to mystical Shangri-La, Yunnan, valued at \$10,000



The Hidden Valley Resort is the first glamping (glamorous camping) boutique resort in Shangri-La, Yunnan. Located in a stunning Tibetan enclave in China's last frontier, the resort offers a truly unique travel experience. Besides glamping under the stars, you get to soak up Tibetan culture, hike, ride a horse, enjoy farm-to-table cuisine and venture to less-travelled places with a bespoke itinerary.

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2. Look out for the giveaway in the Rewards section.
3. Save the deal to your e-wallet.
4. Press the "JOIN" button on the top right and answer this question in no more than 100 words: **"Why I want to go to The Hidden Valley Resort in Shangri-La".**

The contest ends on Feb 8 and the winner will be informed by Feb 18. The travel period is between March and May 2019.

The winner is required to participate in a media interview prior to the trip and to share photos on his or her social media during his or her stay. Other terms and conditions apply.

Read the story here: str.sg/hiddenvalley

Check out this ST video: str.sg/shangrila



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New Products



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The latest LG ArtCool Plus series of air-conditioners comes with built-in Wi-Fi, allowing it to be remotely controlled through the LG SmartThinQ app (available for Android and iOS) on smartphones. For instance, you can turn on the air-conditioning when you are on your way home and return to a cool and comfortable house. You will also never have to worry about forgetting to turn off the air-con anymore.



Wacom Cintiq 16

PEN DISPLAY

\$888, available from Feb 11

Designed for artists and creative professionals, the Wacom Cintiq 16 is a pen display with a full high-definition touchscreen. It has 8,192 levels of pressure sensitivity and tilt response, giving artists precision and accuracy akin to drawing on paper. It also incorporates Wacom's Electro Magnetic Resonance technology, which means the pen battery never needs to be charged. Compatible with both PC and Mac, the Cintiq 16 works with many apps from Adobe, Autodesk, Corel and others.



Honor Watch Magic

SMARTWATCH

\$199

Honor has launched its first smartwatch in Singapore with Watch Magic. It measures 9.8mm thick, weighs 32.5g and comes with a 1.2-inch round AMOLED touchscreen with a resolution of 390 x 390 pixels. It has built-in GPS to track runs and a heart-rate monitor that monitors your health whether you are working out or sleeping. It is also water-resistant to 50m.



Fujifilm GF 100-200mm f/5.6 R LM OIS WR

LENS

\$2,999, available from Feb 14

This is the first zoom lens designed for Fujifilm's GFX medium-format mirrorless camera series. When attached to a GFX camera body, the GF 100-200mm f/5.6 lens has a 35mm equivalent focal range of 79mm to 158mm (due to the camera's 0.79x crop factor). The lens is also weather-sealed and weighs just 1.05kg, making it ideal for outdoor and landscape photographers who brave the elements for that perfect shot.



FiiO M6

PORTABLE AUDIO PLAYER

\$279

The FiiO M6 is a small portable audio player with a 3.2-inch touchscreen display that supports a wide range of high-quality wireless audio formats, such as LDAC, HWA, aptX HD and Bluetooth SBC/AAC. It runs a customised version of Android OS and comes with Wi-Fi and Bluetooth 4.2 connectivity for accessing music-streaming services as well as playing music over the DLNA standard. It also doubles as a USB digital-to-analog converter, supporting up to 192kHz/24-bit decoding when connected to a computer.



Days Gone Collector's Edition

VIDEO GAME

\$219.90, available from April 26

Days Gone is an open-world action-adventure game set in a future after a deadly global pandemic. You play as Deacon, a drifter and bounty hunter trying to survive while exploring the vast and hostile regions of the United States' Pacific Northwest desert on a motorcycle. This collector's edition includes the PS4-exclusive game, a statue of Deacon and his motorcycle as well as other goodies such as decals, collectors' pins and a mini art-book.

Compiled by Trevor Tan

Commentary

Arashi's hiatus marks the end of an era



The 20-year-old Japanese boyband's indefinite break means that their label Johnny's Entertainment is left without its most successful act



Jan Lee

Japanese boyband Arashi announced on Sunday that they will go on indefinite hiatus at the end of next year. At a lighthearted press conference, the members laughed and joked and group leader Satoshi Ohno, 38, said that he wanted to take a break to enjoy freedom and lead "an ordinary life". News of the hiatus trended worldwide immediately and sent shock waves through Japan. To understand why, consider the extent of their popularity and how consistently bankable they have been. Arashi, which debuted in 1999 as

a bunch of teenagers, remain one of Japan's best-selling acts of all time. Their singles – 56 in all spanning from 1999's Arashi to last year's Kimi No Uta (Your Song) – consistently top Japan's Oricon music charts. The five-member group host two regular television programmes and the individual members appear in variety shows, television dramas, films and stage plays. Member Sho Sakurai, 37, is also a newscaster. Variety programme Must Be Arashi! currently airs in Singapore on Wednesdays at 8pm on Gem (StarHub TV Channel 814 and Singtel TV Channel 519). Over the years, the members have been the face of quintessential Japanese products and brands – including Japan Airlines, Japan Post, Hitachi, Nintendo, Kirin beer and Meiji chocolate. They have permeated so many facets of Japanese life and are, to the Japanese public, true-blue national idols. Their appeal extends well beyond their home country. As a fan of the group for more than 12 years, the news was a devastating bolt from the blue even as I empathised with Ohno's desire to experience a life away from the limelight. I first got to know Arashi through the Japanese drama Hana Yori Dango (2005), also known as Boys Over Flowers, which starred member Jun Matsumoto, now 35. Arashi sang the theme song Wish.

Arashi are the last idol group standing, still intact and still a force to be reckoned with. While there are other, newer groups in the stable, at this juncture, not one looks capable of approaching Arashi in popularity.

The immensely successful series went on to spawn a second season and a movie, all of which were paired with songs from the group. In the following years, I weathered adolescence, and later adulthood, with Arashi's songs as my soundtrack. We even went through milestones at the same time. When I dropped biology in Secondary 3, they celebrated their 10th anniversary. They released their

40th single the year I went to Japan for my undergraduate studies. My love for the group has waxed and waned over the years and the announcement of their hiatus closes the book on my first boyband obsession. It will also signify the end of a golden era for Johnny & Associates – which has dominated the J-pop male idol industry. The talent agency, which owns label Johnny's Entertainment, was founded in 1962 by Japanese-American businessman Johnny Kitagawa, now 87. If you know of a J-pop male idol group, chances are they came from Johnny & Associates: Arashi, Shonentai, SMAP, Tokio, Kinki Kids, V6, Tackey & Tsubasa, Kattun, the list goes on. Longevity is a hallmark of the Japanese boyband, in part due to the strong and loyal domestic market. It is a key reason why J-pop acts used to rarely, unlike their South Korean counterparts, venture out of home territory for promotions and performances. Even so, many Johnny & Associates groups have been reshuffled, disbanded or are inactive. SMAP, one of the agency's most successful groups, disbanded in 2016 after nearly 30 years together, reportedly after an ugly internal conflict. Tackey & Tsubasa's Hideaki Takizawa retired from the spotlight last year to take on a management role in Johnny &

Associates. Tokio's Tatsuya Yamaguchi, 47, was fired last year after he admitted to forcibly kissing a high school-aged girl. Arashi are the last idol group standing, still intact and still a force to be reckoned with. While there are other, newer groups in the stable, at this juncture, not one looks capable of approaching Arashi in popularity. The situation is further exacerbated because the Johnny's brand has remained steadfastly traditional and staunchly resisted social media. While K-pop idols constantly tweet and post Instagram Stories, engaging fans with posts, likes, comments and videos, Johnny's talents have no social media presence. They interact with fans periodically via their official fan website, which requires registration, a valid Japanese address and a yearly fee to join. While the agency has taken steps to join the rest of the world in cyberspace – it created its first official YouTube account last year – it still falls behind. It is hard to say if another male J-idol act will be able to take Arashi's place. But for now, what is important for fans is the dignified and thoughtful manner in which the group delivered the bad news – as a sincere and united group, with a two-year notice period to boot. That is what I am taking solace in.

Japanese boyband Arashi, comprising (from left) Satoshi Ohno, Kazunari Ninomiya, Jun Matsumoto, Masaki Aiba and Sho Sakurai, will be suspending their activities at the end of next year. PHOTO: JOHNNY & ASSOCIATES

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The Jagged Little Pill musical (left) is based on a Grammy-winning album by Alanis Morissette (above). PHOTO: NYTIMES

Alanis Morissette's Jagged Little Pill musical heads to Broadway

NEW YORK • Jagged Little Pill is coming to Broadway. Producers said on Monday that the musical, which uses the song catalogue of Canadian singer Alanis Morissette to confront such contemporary issues as rape culture and addiction, will open next autumn. They did not specify a theatre or a date. Jagged Little Pill has had one previous production, a sold-out 10-week run last year at the non-profit American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Reviewing the show for The New York Times, critic Jesse Green said it "takes on the good work we are always asking new musicals to do: the work of singing about real things", but added, "if only it didn't

sing about all of them all at once". In the Boston Globe, Christopher Muther expressed similar misgivings about the catalogue of social issues crammed into the plot, but called it "wildly entertaining" and "wickedly funny in just the right places". The musical features songs written by Morissette and Glen Ballard, many of them from the Grammy-winning 1995 album that gives the show its title, and a book by Diablo Cody, the Oscar-winning screenwriter for Juno (2007). Diane Paulus, who is the artistic director of the American Repertory Theatre and a Tony winner for Pippin (2013), is the director. The cast in Cambridge was led by Elizabeth Stanley and featured a

show-stopping Lauren Patten in a supporting role; the cast for Broadway has not yet been named. The musical, with Vivek J. Tiwary, Arvind Ethan David and Eva Price as lead producers, is expected to be capitalised for up to US\$14 million (\$\$19 million), according to a filing with the United States Securities and Exchange Commission. The producers said they expect the final cost to be slightly lower. In an interview, they said the show is being revised somewhat after its last production. Price said: "We were quite happy with the work we did on our original musical, but you can always keep improving, and the changes we have made are many, many little ones that add up to a more streamlined,

layered, and deeper show. "The world has continued to change and that has affected the writing and the direction." The producers have been working on the show for nearly nine years, largely because of the complexity of hammering out rights agreements for the songs. "We wanted to produce something that was not just another Broadway musical, but was true to the legacy of the record," Tiwary said. "We want to be an entertaining musical with messages." Jagged Little Pill, which was a formative album for many teenagers and cathartic for adults at the time, included hits such as You Oughta Know, Ironic and Hand In My Pocket. NYTIMES

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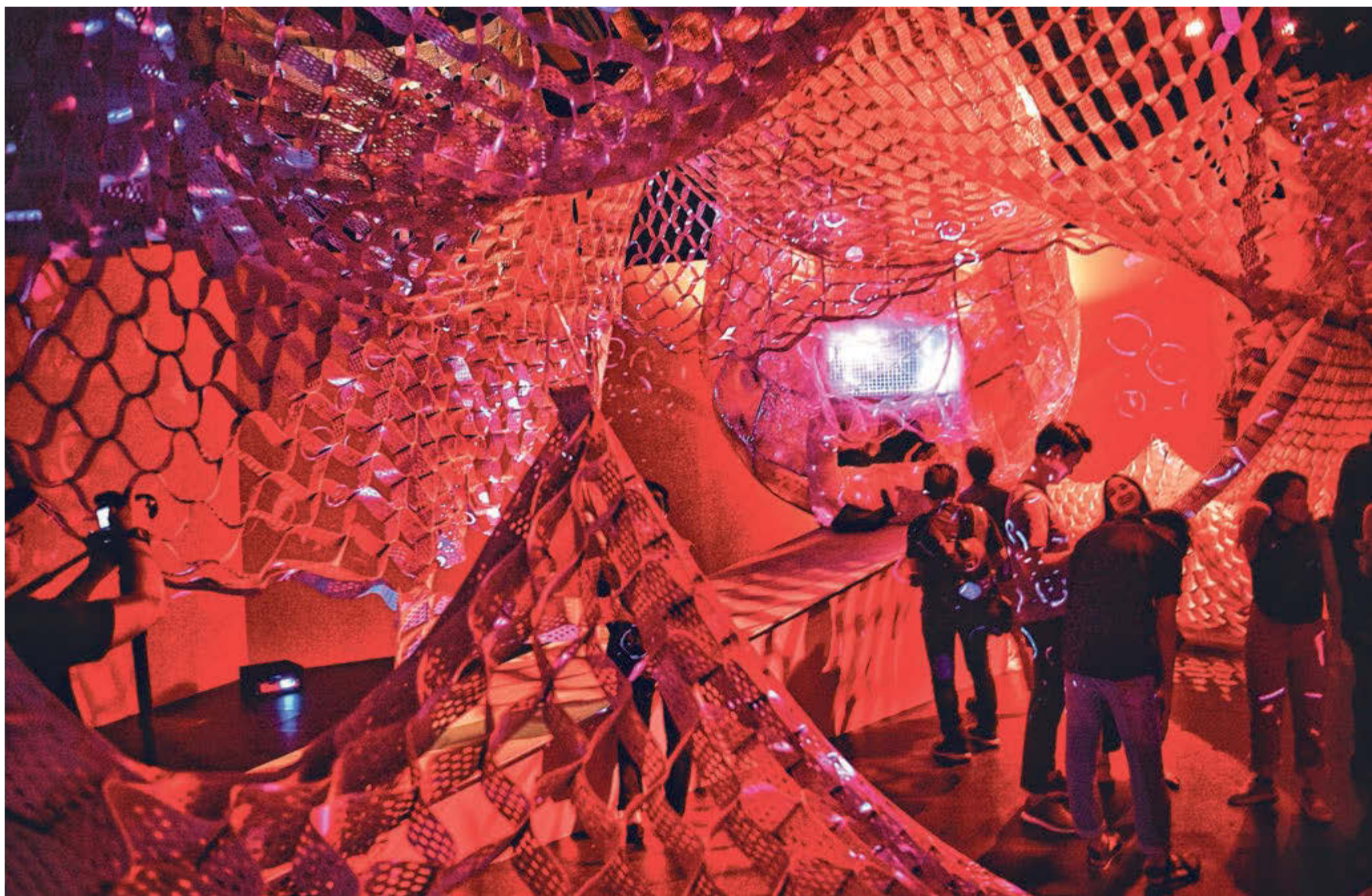
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Sonic Womb by Randy Chan is a structure bathed in deep red hues suspended from the ceiling. It allows people to explore the process of human gestation.
ST PHOTOS: ARIFFIN JAMAR

Immersive digital art



Talking Cheongsams, by Galina Mihaleva and Hedren Sum, features artistic interpretations of cheongsams from the National Collection and two mannequins clad in interactive cheongsams.

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Seven projects by local and international designers are on display at DigiMuse Presents, an exhibition at the National Museum of Singapore

Toh Wen Li

Bewildered by the brave new world of futuristic technology? Fear not, for you can seek the primal comfort of a womb at the basement of the National Museum, as part of a new showcase of digital art-works.

Sonic Womb, the brainchild of Singapore architect Randy Chan, is a structure bathed in deep red hues suspended from the ceiling. It allows people to explore the process of humangestation.

It is part of the second edition of DigiMuse Presents, an exhibition at the National Museum of Singapore, which was launched on Jan 18 in conjunction with Singapore Art Week. Seven projects by local and international designers are on display in different parts of the museum.

This is part of the wider DigiMuse initiative, which was launched in December 2017 to nurture a cultural sector that embraces digital innovation.

Visitors to Sonic Womb can walk around in the womb-like, slow-moving structure made of Versi-Web – a material used to control soil erosion. Microphones hanging from the ceiling detect the noise created by the museum-goers, which are translated into a soundscape that mimics the sounds a foetus hears.

Chan, 48, became a father of twins three years ago.

“I wanted to have a project that marked that (period), before I forget,” says the principal architect of Zarch Collaboratives.

People can also walk up a ramp leading into an “egg” and lie inside the cantilevered steel structure.

“It’s part of the ritual of returning to our origins,” he adds.

The ongoing showcase is presented by the National Museum of Singapore in collaboration with the French digital arts venue Centre des Arts (Enghien-les-Bains), the Bains Numeriques biennale, and The Little Arts Academy which offers arts programmes for children.

Another work is Co(AI)xistence, a

video artwork by French artist Justine Emard, where Japanese dancer Mirai Moriyama and a robot interact with each other.

Then there is Face Of The Day, featuring about 400 photos of fashion designer Yang Derong dressed in all manner of costumes. Visitors can download an application on their mobile devices, and then point them at some of the photos, which come to life with the help of augmented reality technology.

Hanging from the museum’s rotunda are 12 artistic interpretations of cheongsam from the National Collection. They are part of the Talking Cheongsams installation, which also features two mannequins clad in interactive cheongsams. Visitors can touch the conductive threads on those two cheongsams to listen to love letters written by members of the International Cheongsam Association of Singapore.

This speaks to a connection between text and textile, says the artist Galina Mihaleva, an assistant professor at the School of Art, Design and Media at Nanyang Technological University. She created the installation with colleague Hedren Sum, a digital humanities project manager at the Institute of Science and Technology for Humanity at the same university.

Curator Iman Ismail says DigiMuse Presents “explores the creative use of technology, art, and even sound, to create immersive experiences for museum-goers”.

“The showcase demonstrates the exciting potential of marrying digital innovation with culture and the arts, to create playful and thoughtful interactions with our audiences.”

tohwenli@sph.com.sg

BOOK IT/ DIGIMUSE PRESENTS

.....

WHERE: National Museum of Singapore, 93 Stamford Road

.....

WHEN: Till Feb 17, 10am to 7pm daily

.....

ADMISSION: Free with general admission

.....

INFO: www.nationalmuseum.sg/our-exhibitions/exhibition-list/digimuse-presents-2019

Comics

BABY BLUES



GARFIELD



Free to air

CHANNEL 5

AM
6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 15 (HD) (PG) (V)
6.45 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (HD) (V)
7.00 First Look Asia (Simulcast From CNA) (CA)
9.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)
10.00 The \$100,000 Pyramid (HD) (V)
10.30 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
11.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
PM
12.00 Martha Bakes 6 (HD) (IE)
12.30 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (IE)
1.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (CC) (V)
1.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (V)
2.00 Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd 4 (SC)
2.30 Arts 21 (HD) (Cul)
3.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)
4.00 Make You Laugh Out Loud 3 (PG) (V)
4.30 Survivor 36 (PG) (V)
5.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
6.30 The \$100,000 Pyramid (V)
7.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (HD) (CC) (V)
7.30 America's Got Talent: The Champions (V)
8.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 News 5 (HD)
9.30 The Wish (CC) (IE)
10.00 Every Woman (PG) (CC) (IE)
11.00 Scorpion 2 (HD) (PG) (D)
AM
12.00 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
12.30 Code Of Law 4 (PG13) (D)
1.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
2.20 Hawaii Five-O 7 (PG13) (D)
3.10 Grimm 5 (PG13) (D)
4.10 Martha Bakes 6 (IE)
4.40 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (IE)
5.10 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)

CHANNEL 8

AM
6.00 Ah Ma Can Cook (V)
7.00 Frontline (CA)
7.30 Hello Singapore Highlights (HD) (News)
8.00 Walk With Me (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Morning Express (HD) (News)
9.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 Stay Healthy Stay Happy 2017 (IE)

10.30 Night Market Life Aka Life (PG) (D)
PM
12.30 Street Smart 2 (V)
1.00 News 8 At One (HD)
1.30 118 (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 New Doraemon (S)
2.30 The Precedents (PG) (D)
3.30 The Golden Path (CC) (D)
4.30 Taste Of Life (PG) (D)
5.30 118 Reunion (PG) (CC) (D)
6.30 Hello Singapore (HD) (News)
7.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 A Sweet Taste Of Art (CC) (IE)
9.00 Walk With Me (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 News Tonight (HD)
10.30 Fruit, Veggies & Me 2 (HD) (CC) (IE)
11.00 Princess Agents (PG) (D)
AM
12.00 The Princess Weiyoung (PG) (D)
1.00 Celebrity Chef 2 (HD) (V)
2.00 A Time To Dance (D)
4.00 A Place Called Home (PG) (D)

CHANNEL U

PM
3.00 Scrum! (PG) (CC) (D)
4.00 Greener Pastures (CC) (IE)
5.00 Cheongdamdong Scandal (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 The Girl Who Sees Smells (PG) (CC) (D)
7.00 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Schools Unlimited (CC) (IE)
10.00 Brother's Keeper 2 (PG13) (CC) (D)
11.00 News Tonight
11.30 Schools Unlimited (CC) (Info-Ed)
AM
12.30 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
2.30 Close

CNA

AM
6.00 Singapore Tonight
7.00 First Look Asia
9.00 Asia Business First
10.02 Becoming Singapore
11.00 News Now
PM
1.02 Becoming Singapore
2.00 News Now
4.02 Becoming Singapore
5.00 News Now

7.02 Raffles Revealed (CC)
8.00 Primetime Asia
9.02 Champions For Change (CC)
10.00 Singapore Tonight
11.02 Becoming Singapore
AM
12.00 News Now
12.30 Power List Asia 5
1.02 Champions For Change
2.00 News Now
2.30 The Successors 6
3.02 Becoming Singapore
4.00 News Now
4.30 Millionaire Minds 2
5.02 Champions For Change
Programmes may be pre-empted by breaking news

VASANTHAM

PM
3.00 Super Samayal 4 (IE)
3.30 Aasai Asaiya – Cooking For Love (IE)
4.00 Priyasakhi (D)
4.30 Thedal – Star Search 2016 (V)
5.30 Motu Patlu (S)
6.00 Ishq Ka Rang Safed (Hindi) (PG) (D)
7.00 Konjam Soru Konjam Varalaru (PG) (Cul)
7.30 Mella Thiranthathu Kathavu 3 (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Uyire (PG) (CC) (D)
8.30 Tamil Seithi (News)
9.00 Ethiroli 15 (HD) (CC) (CA)
9.30 Theerpugal 4 (CC) (IE)
10.00 Rowthiram (PG13) (D)
10.30 Nijangal (PG) (CC) (D)
11.00 Nyabagam Varuthae 3 (V)
11.30 Tamil Seithi (Encore) (News)
AM
12.00 Close

OKTO

AM
9.00 Tip The Mouse (P)
9.30 Teddies (P) (HD) (IE)
10.00 Doki Specials (HD) (P)
10.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
11.00 Mouk (P)
11.30 Ready Jet Go! (P)
PM
12.00 Hiccups & Sneeze (P)
12.30 Teddies (P) (HD) (IE)

1.00 Coconut The Little Dragon (P)
1.30 Tip The Mouse (P)
2.00 Doki Specials (P)
2.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
3.00 Mouk (P)
3.30 Ready Jet Go! (P)
4.00 Odd Squad (S)
4.30 Captain Flinn And The Pirate Dinosaurs (S)
5.00 Littlest Pet Shop (S)
5.30 Marcus Level (S)
6.00 OddBods (HD) (S)
6.30 Totally Totto (HD) (S)
7.00 My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic (CC) (S)
7.30 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (HD) (CC) (S)
8.00 Turning Mecard (S)
8.30 Inazuma Eleven (HD) (CC) (S)
9.00 ITTF World Tour – Hungarian Open 2019 (Sports)
11.00 American Ninja Warrior 6 (HD) (PG) (Sports)
AM
12.00 Close

SURIA

PM
3.00 Juxbox Ekspres
4.00 Seindah Takdir Cinta (PG) (D)
5.00 Rintihan Hati (HD) (CC) (D)
6.00 Ejen Ali (HD) (S)
6.30 Top 5 Makan (CC) (IE)
7.00 Makmum Yang Paling Aku Cinta (PG) (CC) (D) (Debut)
8.00 Berita (HD) (News)
8.30 Detik (PG) (CA)
9.00 Di Sebalik Bisik Pada Langit (PG) (CC) (M)
9.30 Hilang Kasih Di Sarajevo (CC) (D)
10.30 Instageram (PG) (CC) (D)
11.30 Berita (HD) (News) (R)
AM
12.00 Close

C: Children; CA: Current Affairs; CC: Closed Captions; Cul: Culture; D: Drama; IE: Info-Ed; M: Movies; P: Preschool; PG: Parental Guidance; R: Repeat; S: Schoolkids; SC: Sitcom; V: Variety

Programme schedules correct at time of printing. Telecast details from Mediacorp, StarHub and Singtel TV. For pay TV updates, go to www.starhub.com/tv or www.singtelv.com.sg

TheStarsSay

Aries (March 21 – April 19)
You are speaking truth to power. Try not to worry too much about whether people's feelings are hurt.

Taurus (April 20 – May 20)
People cannot take you seriously for now and your self-righteous attitude could hurt you.

Gemini (May 21 – June 20)
You need to deal with someone who has the right kind of energy – it could be anyone.

Cancer (June 21 – July 22)
You feel torn between two choices. Take all the time you need for this one.

Leo (July 23 – Aug 22)
A big adventure awaits you. Your great energy should help you overcome all obstacles.

Virgo (Aug 23 – Sept 22)
Let the day's events carry you along – resistance is futile. You get more done if you go with the flow.

Libra (Sept 23 – Oct 22)
Stick with what you know, though you may be tempted to take off in some new direction.

Scorpio (Oct 23 – Nov 21)
Something bigger than expected is going on. Step back and try to get your peers to help out.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 – Dec 21)
It is a great time to reach out and try new things, especially if the people you love are involved.

Capricorn (Dec 22 – Jan 19)
Your speed is picking up. Find time to gauge your progress as things can move quickly.

Aquarius (Jan 20 – Feb 18)
Someone needs a wake-up call. See if you can get your people to put aside their differences for now.

Pisces (Feb 19 – March 20)
Push ahead and get others to follow your lead. You should have a good day no matter what you do.

• Provided by Astrology.com (www.astrology.com)

Radio

KISS92

AM
6.00 Maddy, Jason & Arnold In The Morning
10.00 Carol Smith
PM
1.00 Charmaine Yee
4.00 Shan Wee
8.00 Josh's Goodnight Kiss

ONE FM 91.3

AM
6.00 ONE FM's #1 Breakfast Show With Glenn And The Flying Dutchman
10.00 Cheryl Miles
PM
4.00 Weekdays With ONE FM

MONEY FM 89.3

AM
6.00 The Breakfast Huddle With Elliott Danker, Yasmin Jonkers & Ryan Huang
10.00 Middy With Howie Lim
PM
2.00 Prime Time With Claressa Monteiro
4.00 The Curve With Michelle Martin & Bernard Lim

UFM100.3

AM
6.00 UFM100.3 Mornings With Wenhong, Limei & Xiaozhu
10.00 Lively Life With Kemlin
PM
1.00 Tea With Yuling
4.00 Sing-a-long With Xinying & Weilong
8.00 Feel The Night With Chengyao

96.3 HAO FM

AM
6.00 Morning Drive Time With Jing Yun, De Ming And Jie Qi
10.00 Lunch Break With Anna
PM
1.00 Automation
4.00 Evening Drive Time With Li Yi And Guo Xian
8.00 Night Time With Wei Wen

Tides

SUN RISE/SET TIME: 7:17am/7:20pm
MOON RISE/SET TIME: 2:36am/2:56pm

TIDES TODAY: Singapore: 12am (1.5m), 6:13am (2.6m), 12:4pm (1m), 8:26pm (2.2m). Desaru: 12am (1.8m), 5:35am (2.4m), 12:41pm (1.2m), 8:09pm (2.4m). Port Dickson: 2am (2m), 9:17am (1m), 2:36pm (1.5m), 8:45pm (0.9m). Mersing: 4:29am (2.5m), 11:57am (1.3m), 7:40pm (2.7m).

TIDES TOMORROW: Singapore: 1:26am (1.7m), 7:24am (2.6m), 2:43pm (0.9m), 10pm (2.4m). Desaru: 1:33am (1.9m), 6:26am (2.4m), 1:48pm (1.1m), 9:43pm (2.5m). Port Dickson: 3:45am (2m), 10:50am (0.9m), 4:19pm (1.6m), 10:32pm (0.7m). Mersing: 1:46am (2.2m), 5:08am (2.4m), 12:52pm (1.2m), 8:53pm (2.9m).

For updates and more details, call Meteorological Service Singapore, NEA, on 6542-7788 or go to www.nea.gov.sg

StarHub TV

HISTORY (CHANNEL 401)

AM
8.00 Storage Wars 10/8.30 Pawn Stars 19
9.30 The Pickers 11/10.25 Forged In Fire 4
11.20 Storage Wars 12
PM
12.15 Lone Star Restoration
1.10 Mountain Men 7/2.05 Pawn Stars 18
2.35 Lone Star Restoration
3.30 Storage Wars: Miami
3.55 Storage Wars 10/4.25 Forged In Fire 4
5.20 Mountain Men 7/6.15 The Pickers 11
7.10 Pawn Stars 18
8.05 History Drama: Project Blue Book
9.00 Ancient Aliens 10
9.55 History Drama: Project Blue Book
10.50 Hunting Hitler 2
11.45 Lone Star Restoration

LIFETIME (CHANNEL 514)

AM
8.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
9.00 Gok's Fill Your House For Free
10.00 Glam Masters/11.00 Atlanta Plastic
PM
12.00 Dance Moms 6
1.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
2.00 Jodi Picoult's Salem Falls
3.35 Married At First Sight Australia 4
5.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
6.00 Idol Moms
7.00 Little Women LA: Terra's Little Family
7.30 Married At First Sight Australia 4
9.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
10.00 Sea Change/11.35 Idol Moms

HBO (CHANNEL 601)

AM
7.25 Chasing Liberty
9.15 Batman Vs Two-Face
10.25 Meet The Fockers (NC16)
PM
12.20 Inconceivable (2017) (NC16)
2.05 Ingrid Goes West (NC16)
3.45 Daddy Day Care/5.15 Treasure Planet
6.50 12 Strong (NC16)/9.00 Lady Bird (NC16)/10.35 Kill Bill: Vol. 1 (M18)

CINEMAX (CHANNEL 611)

AM
8.05 Realive (NC16)/9.50 Fletch
11.30 The Art Of War
PM
1.25 Mr. & Mrs. Smith/3.25 Streets Of Fire
4.55 Dickie Roberts: Former Child Star
6.35 The One/8.05 Entrapment
10.00 The Faculty (NC16)
11.45 Enemy At The Gates

HUB E CITY (CHANNEL 825)

AM
8.15 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)
9.15 Dowry (HD)
10.15 Viva La Romance (HD)
PM
12.15 The Gentlemen Of Wolgyesu Tailor Shop (HD)/1.30 Signal (HD)
2.45 The King Vs The King 2 (HD)

4.15 Go As Far As You Can (HD)
4.45 The Gentlemen Of Wolgyesu Tailor Shop (HD)/6.00 Dowry (HD)
7.00 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)
8.00 Chinese Restaurant 2 (HD)
10.00 Noble Aspirations (HD)
11.00 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)

HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)

AM
7.00 ISU European Figure Skating Championships 2019: Men Short Programme
PM
12.30 ISU European Figure Skating Championships 2019: Pairs Free Skating
3.30 Extreme Sports: World Surf League 2018: Billabong Pipe Masters Highlights
4.30 Motorsports: FIA World RallyCross Championship 2018 Round 2 Portugal Highlights/5.30 Tennis: Deuce 2019
6.00 Tennis: ATP World Tour Uncovered 2019
6.30 Tennis: ATP Champions Tour 2018
7.00 Multi Sport: Action Sports World 2018
8.00 Asean Basketball League 2018/19: Hong Kong Eastern Vs Saigon Heat
10.00 Cycling: 2018 Saitama Criterion By Le Tour De France Highlights
11.00 Tennis: Mountain Bike: Crankworx World Tour 2018: Innsbruck Highlights
AM
12.00 Tennis: Mubadala World Tennis Championship 2018 Day 3 3rd Place Match
2.00 Tennis: Deuce 2019
2.30 Tennis: ATP World Tour Uncovered 2019/3.00 Cycling: Presidential Cycling Tour Of Turkey 2018 Highlights
4.00 Cycling: inCycle 2018
5.00 Multi Sport: Action Sports World 2018

HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

AM
7.30 Wrestling: WWE Experience (PG)
8.30 Football: The EFL Highlights 2018/19
9.00 Wrestling: WWE Smackdown (PG) (Live)
11.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
11.30 Football: Coppa Italia 2018/19 Quarter-finals Milan Vs Napoli
PM
1.30 HSBC World Rugby Sevens World Series 2018/19 Round 3 Hamilton: Match 25 – 28 Quarter-finals
3.00 HSBC World Rugby Sevens World Series 2018/19 Round 3 Hamilton: Match 29 – 32 Quarter-finals
4.30 Wrestling: WWE This Week (PG)
5.00 The Football Review
5.30 National Basketball League Round 15 Sydney Kings Vs Perth Wildcats
7.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
8.00 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 CLS Knights Indonesia Vs Westports Malaysia Dragons (Live)
10.00 Wrestling: WWE Raw (PG13)
AM
12.25 Football: Coppa Italia 2018/19 Quarter-finals Fiorentina Vs Roma (Live)
2.30 Wrestling: WWE This Week (PG)
3.00 The Football Review
3.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
4.30 Football: Coppa Italia 2018/19 Quarter-finals Atalanta Vs Juventus (Live)

Singtel TV

CARTOON NETWORK (CHANNEL 226)

AM
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
8.00 Teen Titans Go!
9.00 Grizzy And The Lemmings
9.30 The Tom And Jerry Show
10.00 We Bare Bears
10.30 Supernobots
11.00 The Powerpuff Girls
PM
12.00 Teen Titans Go!
1.00 We Bare Bears
2.00 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
2.30 The Powerpuff Girls
3.00 Running Man Animation
3.30 The Amazing World Of Gumball
4.00 We Bare Bears
4.30 The Powerpuff Girls
5.00 Teen Titans Go!
5.30 Ben 10
6.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches
6.30 Summer Camp Island
7.30 Grizzy And The Lemmings
8.00 We Bare Bears
9.00 The Powerpuff Girls
10.00 Regular Show
10.30 Steven Universe
11.00 Clarence
11.30 Adventure Time

AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)

AM
6.00 MacGyver 2
6.45 Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior
7.30 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon
2/8.20 The Elements: Cosentino
9.10 American Ninja Warrior 8
10.00 MacGyver 2
10.50 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 3/11.40 Carnage
PM
12.30 Cyril: Simply Magic
1.25 The Elements: Cosentino
2.15 American Ninja Warrior 8
3.05 Carnage/3.55 MacGyver 2
4.45 Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior
5.35 American Ninja Warrior 8
6.25 The Blacklist 6
7.15 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 2
8.05 Ncis: Los Angeles 8
9.45 Seal Team 2/10.35 Supernatural 14
11.25 Seal Team 2

WARNER TV (HD) (CHANNEL 306)

AM
6.00 The Carbonaro Effect
6.50 Top 20 Funniest
7.40 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow
8.30 Supergirl 2/9.20 The Flash 3
10.10 The Carbonaro Effect
11.00 Breaking The Magician's Code
11.50 Race To The Scene
PM
12.40 Arrow 7
1.30 The Big Bang Theory 9
1.55 Friends 9
2.20 The Carbonaro Effect

3.10 Breaking The Magician's Code
4.00 The Flash 3
4.50 Supergirl 2
5.40 Top 20 Funniest
6.30 The Flash 3
7.20 The Big Bang Theory 9
7.45 Friends 9
8.10 Top 20 Funniest 2
9.00 Lethal Weapon 3
9.50 Race To The Scene
10.40 The Big Bang Theory 9
11.05 Friends 9
11.30 Lethal Weapon 3

COMEDY CENTRAL ASIA (HD) (CHANNEL 324)

AM
6.00 At Midnight With Chris Hardwick 2
6.25 The Daily Show 24
6.50 Just For Laughs Gags 12
7.15 Kids Do The Craziest Things
7.40 Mr Bean/8.10 Your Face Or Mine 3
8.35 Most Ridiculous 2
9.00 Billy On The Street 5
9.20 Takeshi's Castle 4
9.45 Mr Bean/10.15 Most Ridiculous 2
10.40 Almost Royals 2
11.10 Saturday Night Live 43
PM
12.00 The Daily Show 24
12.25 Steve Rannazzissi: Breaking Dad
1.10 Just For Laughs Gags 14
1.35 Inside Comedy 3
2.35 Mr Bean/3.05 Takeshi's Castle 4
3.30 Most Ridiculous 2
3.55 Almost Royals 2
4.20 Lip Sync Battle 4
5.10 Hood Adjacent With James Davis
5.35 The Jim Jefferies Show
6.00 The Daily Show 24
6.25 Caraoke Showdown
6.50 Your Face Or Mine 3
7.15 Most Ridiculous 2
7.40 Billy On The Street 5
8.10 Takeshi's Castle 4
8.35 The Goldbergs 5
9.25 Hot In Cleveland 6
10.15 Ingorious Pranksters
10.30 Inside Amy Schumer 2
10.55 The Fuccons
11.00 The Jim Jefferies Show
11.25 The Fuccons
11.30 The Daily Show 24

JIA LE (HD) (CHANNEL 502)

AM
7.00 First Love
8.00 Entrepreneurial Age
9.00 Eagle And Youngster
10.00 100% Wife
PM
12.10 First Love
1.00 In The Name Of Love
2.00 100% Wife
4.10 Entrepreneurial Age
5.00 First Love
6.00 In The Name Of Love
7.00 100% Wife
9.10 First Love
10.00 Entrepreneurial Age
11.00 Eagle And Youngster

Seungri's club staff accused of assault

SEOUL • A public relations storm has blown up for BigBang singer Seungri after the staff of his Burning Sun club in Seoul were accused of assaulting a man.

According to the man called Mr Kim, he had requested security guards to help a woman whom he said was being sexually harassed.

Instead, in the incident in November last year, he was beaten up by the guards and taken to a police station, where he said he was also physically assaulted.

CCTV footage of the incident at the club has since surfaced.

Now, netizens in South Korea are calling on Seungri to give an explanation over the conduct of his staff.

The singer recently had to apologise to the boss of his management company YG Entertainment over his claim of receiving zero support from it for his solo tour.

YG boss Yang Hyun-suk posted a

screenshot of his text message exchange with Seungri.

The singer, 28, wrote: "I will put an end to the controversy. I'm sorry for everything."

"I wanted to be funny while talking and I think I went a bit overboard."

In another act seen as trying not to make waves in a K-pop industry where labels tightly manage their artists' careers, he added: "Sir, I'll go to the seventh floor any time."

"I love you. Forever."

Mr Yang's office is on that floor.

Before Seungri backed down, his fans had started an online drive urging YG to provide the singer – who will perform in Singapore on Feb 23 – with backup dancers and promotional activities.

Seungri, whose bandmates T.O.P, G-Dragon, Daesung and Taeyang are serving their mandatory military service, is expected to enlist this year.

On social media



SINGER'S HAIRY MOVE FOR HARRY STYLES' BIRTHDAY: Is this the right direction to take to get the attention of One Direction singer Harry Styles?

Not all netizens are impressed that up-and-coming rock singer Kelsy Karter (left), 24, has got a tattoo of Styles on her face.

On Sunday, the New Zealander had posted her tattoo tribute to Styles ahead of his 25th birthday on Friday, writing: "Mama, look what I made me do."

Previously, she had tweeted: "Finally know what I'm getting Harry for his birthday."

But lest some think that her devotion is only skin-deep, Karter had actually spoken of her obsession with the English singer in an interview last year.

"I really want to work with him. Let's work, Harry."

While there is some debate by netizens over whether the tattoo is a permanent or temporary one, People magazine reported that she has also recorded a song, called Harry, of course.

The lyrics go: "Harry, I'm gonna make you love me/You're gonna make me breakfast/It's a secret just between us/We can keep it low-key/I ain't being funny/You should be so lucky to put your velvet arms around me."

PHOTO: KELSAY KARTER/INSTAGRAM

K-pop artists HyunA and E'Dawn with South Korean singer Psy (centre). PHOTO: PSY / INSTAGRAM



HyunA and E'Dawn join Psy's label P Nation

SEOUL • Can P Nation provide the passport to fame for K-pop artists HyunA and E'Dawn?

On Sunday, South Korean singer Psy, who is behind P Nation, announced that his label will now manage the duo.

It is another step forward for Psy, 41, who left YG Entertainment in May last year to blaze his own trail.

He had said that he wanted to start his own label, with the aim to harness his 19 years of experience

to groom newcomers and give back to the K-pop industry.

HyunA and E'Dawn were signed with Cube Entertainment, but parted ways with it last year after it objected to the pair's publicising of their romance.

After her debut in 2007 with Wonder Girls, HyunA, 26, made a successful transition to a solo career with hits including Bubble Pop!, Ice Cream and Red, reported The Korea Herald.

She also appeared in the video of Psy's 2012 global hit Gangnam Style, which has amassed a whopping 3.2 billion views on YouTube.

Posting online from Bangkok, where she said she was taking a vacation with E'Dawn, 24, HyunA wrote: "I'm gaining strength by looking at the comments from fans. This is a very meaningful day. I always want to work hard and learn and I have a lot of desire to do things."

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the new paper

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Rapper's accuser files complaint after leak

PARIS • A woman who accused American singer Chris Brown of rape has filed a new complaint in France after her photo was leaked on the Internet.

The 25-year-old, identified in media reports as "Karima", alleged that the picture, taken by the police as she filed the complaint, was posted on social media.

An investigation for violation of judicial secrets, violation of a professional secret and distribution of images or information on the identity of a victim of sexual aggression has been launched by the Paris prosecutor's office, a source said.

The woman's lawyer, Mr Jean-Marc Descoubes, said the photograph was taken by the police to be used only in connection with the investigation.

"We have reasons to believe that someone took a photo of the photo of my client during a detention or a hearing and it is circulating on social media," he added.

The woman claimed that Brown, 29, along with his bodyguard and a friend, assaulted her in the Mandarin Oriental hotel in Paris on the night of Jan 15.

Brown and his associates were released without charge last week after being held overnight for questioning on charges of aggravated rape and a drug offence.

According to his lawyer, the singer had no sexual relations with the woman and has filed a complaint for defamation.

Mr Descoubes has asked for a face-to-face confrontation between his client and those she accused. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

In short

Glass stays atop box office

Glass, a psychological thriller from director M. Night Shyamalan, has topped the North American box office for a second weekend.

The Upside took second spot, while Aquaman was at No. 3.

Late XXXTentacion has a son

The family of XXXTentacion has announced the birth of his son just over seven months after the death of the American rapper in an apparent robbery attempt.

Spelling ordered to repay \$119,000

LOS ANGELES • A bank has spelt out its demand – actress Tori Spelling has to repay about US\$88,000 (\$S119,000).

According to a report on Radar Online, American Express Centurion Bank has asked the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department for help recovering the amount owed by the star of Beverly Hills, 90210 (1990 to 2000).

The 45-year-old, whose late father Aaron Spelling was a legendary Hollywood producer, has been sued before over financial matters.

In December 2016, City National Bank took her and her husband Dean McDermott to court to claw back US\$200,000 after they could not repay a loan.

The actress has admitted it is hard for her to balance her books.

"It's no mystery why I have money problems," she revealed in 2013 memoir *Spelling It Like It Is*.

"I grew up rich beyond anyone's wildest dreams. I never knew anything else. Even when I try to embrace a simpler lifestyle, I can't seem to let go of my expensive tastes."

"Even when my tastes aren't fancy, they're still costly. I moved houses to simplify my life, but lost almost a million dollars along the way."

She has also drawn backlash from netizens after her daughter Stella, 10, who launched a company selling slime items a year ago, failed to ship the goods.

American Express Centurion Bank has asked the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department to help recover the amount owed by Tori Spelling.

PHOTO: TORI SPELLING/INSTAGRAM